Authors : Ayatullah Murtadha Mutahhari

An Introduction to Irfan



بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم

An Introduction to Irfan

:Writer

Mortaza Motahhari

:Published in print

London

:Digital Publisher

Ghaemiyeh center of computerized researches

Contents

An Introduction to Irfan

BOOK ID

Authors(s): Ayatullah Murtadha Mutahhari

Category: Spirituality

Journal: Vol.۴, N.۱

Topic Tags: Irfan Sufism Shia Spiritual Teachings Spirituality

point

Language

English

Irfan (Shi'i spiritual teachings) as compared to tasawwuf (Sufism), its beliefs,' practices, different parts (Shari'ah, Tariqa, and Haqiqa), as well as its major .practitioners throughout Islamic History

Introduction

This short introduction to irfan is a part of the author's book Ashnai ba ulum e Islami (An Introduction to the Islamic Sciences) written in seven parts: ۱) logic, ۲) philosophy, ۳) kalam, ۴) irfan, ۵) fiqh, ۶) usul al fiqh, ۷) hikmat e amali (ethics).(۳)

Irfan is one of the disciplines that originated within the realm of Islamic culture and' developed there to attain a high level of sophistication. But before we can begin to discuss 'irfan, we must realize that it can be approached from two viewpoints: the .social and the academic

Unlike the scholars of other Islamic disciplines - such as the Quranic commentators (mufassirun), the scholars of hadith (muhaddithun), the jurisprudents (fuqaha'), the theologians (mutakallimun), the philosophers, the men of literature, and the poets - the 'urafa' are a group of scholars who have not only developed their own science,

'irfan, producing great scholars and important books, but have also given rise within the Islamic world to a distinct social grouping. In this the 'urafa' are unique; for the scholars of the other Islamic disciplines – such as the jurisprudents, for instance – form solely academic groupings and are not viewed as a social group

.distinct from the rest of society

In view of this distinction the gnostics, when referred to as belonging to a certain academic discipline, are called 'urafa' and when referred to as a social group are .(generally called Sufis (mutasawwifah

The 'urafa' and sufis are not regarded as forming a separate sect in Islam, nor do they claim themselves to be such. They are to be found within every Islamic school and sect, yet, at the same time, they coalesce to form a distinct social group. The factors that set them apart from the rest of Islamic society are a distinctive chain of ideas and opinions, a special code governing their social intercourse, dress and even, sometimes, the way they wear their hair and beards, and their living communally in (their hospices. (Pers. Khaniqah; Ar-ribat, zawiyah; Turk. tekkiye

Of course, there are and have always been 'urafa' - particularly amongst the Shi'ah - who bear none of these external signs to distinguish them socially from others; yet, at the same time, they have been profoundly involved in the spiritual methodology of 'irfan (sayr wa suluk). It is these who are the real gnostics; not those who have invented for themselves hundreds of special mannerisms and customs and have .brought innovations into being

In this series of lectures, in which we are taking a general look at Islamic sciences and disciplines, we will not be dealing with the social and sectarian aspect of gnosis, that is to say, tasawwuf (sufism). We will

limit ourselves to an examination of 'irfan as a discipline and branch amongst the .branches of Islam's scientific culture

To look thoroughly at the social aspects of sufism would require us to examine its causes and origins, the effects - positive and negative, beneficial and detrimental - it has and has had upon Islamic society, the nature of the relations between the sufis and other Islamic groups, the hue it has given to the whole of Islamic teachings, and the role it has played in the diffusion of Islam throughout the world. This is far beyond the range of these lectures, and here we will consider the tradition of 'irfan only as a .science and as one of the academic disciplines of Islam

Irfan, as a scientific and academic discipline, itself has two branches: the practical' and the theoretical. The practical aspect of 'irfan describes and explains the relationship and responsibilities the human being bears towards itself, towards the world and towards God. Here, 'irfan is similar to ethics (akhlaq), both of them being practical sciences. There do exist differences, however, and later we will explain .them

The practical teaching of 'irfan is also called the itinerary of the spiritual path (sayr wa suluk; lit. 'traveling and journeying'). Here, the wayfarer (salik) who desires to reach the goal of the sublime peak of humanness - that is to say, tawhid - is told where to set off, the ordered stages and stations that he must traverse, the states and conditions

he will undergo at these stations, and the events that will befall him. Needless to say, all these stages and stations must be passed under the guidance and supervision of a mature and perfect example of humanity who, having traveled this path, is aware of the manners and ways of each station. If not, and there is no perfect human being to guide him on his path, he is in danger of going astray.

The perfect man, the master, who must necessarily accompany the novice on the spiritual journey according to the 'urafa', has been called in their vocabulary as Ta'ir al-quds (the Holy Bird) and Khidr:

Accompany my zeal on the path, O Ta'ir al-Quds,

The path to the goal is long, and I new to the journey.

Leave not this stage without the company of Khidr,

There is darkness ahead; be afraid of losing the way.

Of course, there is a world of difference between the tawhid of the 'arif and the general view of tawhid. For the 'arif, tawhid is the sublime peak of humanness and the final goal of his spiritual journey, while for the ordinary people, and even the philosophers, tawhid means the essential Unity of the Necessary Being. For the 'arif, tawhid means that the ultimate reality is only God, and everything other than God is mere appearance, not reality. The 'arif's tawhid means that 'other than God there is nothing'. For the 'arif, tawhid means following a path and arriving at

the stage when he sees nothing but God. However, this view of tawhid is not accepted by the opponents of the 'urafa', and some of them have declared such a view to be heretic. Yet the 'urafa' are convinced that this is the only true tawhid, and that the .(other stages of it cannot be said to be free of polytheism (shirk

The 'urafa' do not see the attainment of the ideal stage of tawhid to be the function of reason and reflection. Rather they consider it to be the work of the heart, and attained through struggle, through the journeying, and through purifying and .disciplining the self

This, however, is the practical aspect of 'irfan, which is not unlike ethics in this respect, for both discuss a series of things that 'ought to be done'. However, there are differences, and the first of these is that 'irfan discusses the human being's relationship with itself, with the world and with God, and its primal concern is man's relationship with God. Systems of ethics, on the other hand, do not all consider it necessary for the relationship between man and God to be discussed; it is only the .religious ethical systems that give importance and attention to this matter

The second difference is that the methodology of spiritual progression, sayr wa suluk, as the words sayr (traveling) and suluk (journeying) imply, is a dynamic one, while ethics is static. That is, 'irfan speaks about a point of departure, a destination, and

the stages and stations which, in their correct order, the wayfarer must traverse in order to arrive at the final destination. In the 'arif's view, there really is a path before the human being - a path that is actual and not in the least a metaphor - and this path must be followed stage by stage, station by station; to arrive at any station without having traversed the preceding one is, in the 'arif's view, impossible. Thus the 'arif views the human soul to be a living organism, like a seedling or like a child, whose perfection lies in growth and maturation in accordance with a particular system and .order

In ethics, however, the subjects are handled solely as a series of virtues, such as righteousness, honesty, sincerity, chastity, generosity, justice, and preferring others over oneself (ithar), to name but a few, with which the soul must be adorned. In the view of ethics, the human soul is rather like a house to be furnished with a series of beautiful objects, pictures and decorations, and no importance is attached to a particular sequence. It is not important where one begins or where one ends. It is of no consequence whether one starts at the ceiling or at the walls, at the top of a wall or at the bottom and so on. On the contrary, in 'irfan the ethical elements are discussed .in a dynamic perspective

The third difference between these two disciplines is that the spiritual elements of

ethics are limited to concepts and ideas that are generally commonplace, while the spiritual elements of 'irfan are much more profound and expansive. In the spiritual methodology of 'irfan, much mention is made of the heart and the states and happenings it will experience, and these experiences are known only to the wayfarer of the path during the course of his struggles and his journey on the path, while other .people have no idea of these states and happenings

The other branch of 'irfan is related to interpretation of being, that is, God, the universe, and the human being. Here 'irfan resembles philosophy, for both seek to understand existence, whereas practical 'irfan seeks, like ethics, to change the human being. However, just as there are differences between practical 'irfan and ethics, so also there exist differences between theoretical 'irfan and philosophy, and .in the following section we will explain these differences

Theoretical Irfan

Theoretical 'irfan, as said before, is concerned with ontology, and discusses God, the world, and the human being. This aspect of 'irfan resembles theological philosophy (falsafeh-ye ilahi), which also seeks to describe being. Like theological philosophy, 'irfan also defines its subject, essential principles and problems, but whereas philosophy relies solely upon rational principles for its arguments, 'irfan bases its deductions on principles discovered through mystic experience (kashf) and then .reverts to the language of reason to explain them

The rationalistic deductions of philosophy can be likened to studying a passage written originally in the same language; the arguments

of 'irfan, on the other hand, are like studying something that has been translated from some other language in which it was originally written. To be more precise, the 'arif wishes to explain those things which he claims to have witnessed with his heart and .his entire being by using the language of reason

The ontology of 'irfan is in several ways profoundly different from the ontology of philosophers. In the philosopher's view, both God and other things have reality, with the difference that while God is the Necessary Being (wajib al-wujud) and Existing-By-Himself, things other than God are only possible existents (mumkin al-wujud), existing- through-another, and are effects of the Necessary Being. However, the 'arif's ontology has no place for things other than God as existing alongside Him, even if they are effects of which He is the cause; rather, the Divine Being embraces and encompasses all things. That is to say, all things are names, qualities, and .manifestations of God, not existents alongside Him

The aim of the philosopher also differs from that of the 'arif. The philosopher wishes to understand the world; he wishes to form in his mind a correct and relatively complete picture of the realm of existence. The philosopher considers the highest mark of human perfection to lie in perceiving, by way of reason, the exact nature of existence, so that the macrocosm finds a reflection within his mind while he in turn becomes a rational microcosm. Thus it is said when defining philosophy

that: [Philosophy is] the (final) development of a rational knower ('alim) into an actual .(world ('alam

This means that philosophy is a study whereby a human being becomes a rational microcosm similar to the actual macrocosm. But the 'arif, on the other hand, would have nothing to do with reason and understanding; he wishes to reach the very .kernel and reality of existence, God, to become connected to it and witness it

In the 'arif's view, human perfection does not mean having a picture of the realm of existence in one's mind; rather it is to return, by means of treading the spiritual path of progression, to the origin from which one has come, to overcome the separation of distance between oneself and the Divine Essence, and, in the realm of nearness, to .obliterate one's finite self to abide in Divine Infinitude

The tools of the philosopher are reason, logic and deduction, while the tools of the 'arif are the heart, spiritual struggle, purification and disciplining of the self, and an .inner dynamism

Later, when we come to the world-view of 'irfan, we shall also discuss how it differs .from the world-view of philosophy

Irfan, both practical and theoretical, is closely connected with the holy religion of' Islam. Like every other religion - in fact more than any other religion - Islam has explained the relationships of man with God, with the world, and with himself; and it .has also given attention to describing and explaining existence

Now, the question

inevitably arises here about the relation between the ideas of 'irfan and the teachings of Islam. Of course, the 'urafa' never claim that they have something to say that is above or beyond Islam, and they are earnest in their denials of any such imputations. In fact, they claim to have discovered more of the realities of Islam, and that they are the true Muslims. Whether in the practical teaching of 'irfan or the theoretical, the 'urafa' always support their views by referral to the Quran, the Sunnah of the Prophet .and the Imams, and the practice of the eminent amongst the Prophet's Companions

However, others have held different views about the 'urafa', and these may be :mentioned

a) A group of muhaddithun and jurisprudents has been of the view that the 'urafa') are not practically bound to Islam, and that their referrals to the Quran and the Sunnah are merely a ruse to deceive the simple-minded people and to draw to themselves the hearts of the Muslims. This group is of the view that 'irfan, basically, .has no connection with Islam

b) A group of modernists who do not have favourable relations with Islam and are) ready to give a tumultuous welcome to anything that gives the appearance of freedom from the observances prescribed by the Shari'ah (ibahah) and which can be interpreted as a movement or uprising in the past against Islam and its laws, like the first group, believe that in practice the 'urafa' had no faith

or belief in Islam, and that 'irfan and tasawwuf was a movement of the non-Arab .peoples against Islam and the Arabs, disguised under the robes of spirituality

This group and the first are united in their view that the 'urafa' are opposed to Islam. The difference between them is that the first group considers Islam to be sacred and, by banking on the Islamic sentiments of the Muslim masses, wishes to condemn the 'urafa' and, in this way, to hoot them off from the stage of the Islamic sciences. The second group, however, by leaning on the great personalities of the 'urafa'- some of whom are of world-renown - wishes to use them as a means of propaganda against Islam. They detract Islam on the grounds that the subtle and sublime ideas of 'irfan .found in Islamic culture are in fact alien to Islam

They consider that these elements entered Islamic culture from outside, for, they say, Islam and its ideas thrive on a far lower level. This group also claims that the 'urafa's citations of the Quran and hadith were solely due to dissimulation and fear of the .masses. This, they claim, was a means for them to save their lives

c) Besides the above two, there is also a third group which takes a rather neutral) view of 'irfan. The view of this group is that 'irfan and sufism contain many innovations and deviations that do not accord with the Quran and the traditions; that this is more

true of the practical teaching of 'irfan than its theoretical ideas, especially where it takes a sectarian aspect. Yet, they say, the 'urafa', like the Islamic scholars of other ranks and the majority of Islamic sects, have had the most sincere intentions towards Islam, never wishing to make any assertions contrary to its teachings. It is quite possible that they have made mistakes, in the same way as the other types of scholars - theologians, philosophers, Quranic commentators, and jurisprudents - .have made mistakes, but this has never been due to an evil intention towards Islam

In the view of this group, the issue of the 'urafa's supposed opposition to Islam was raised by those who harbored a special prejudice either against 'irfan or against Islam. If a person were to disinterestedly study the books of the 'urafa', provided that he is acquainted with their terminology and language, although he might come across .many a mistake, he will not doubt the sincerity of their complete devotion to Islam

Of the three views, I prefer the third. I do not believe that the 'urafa' have had evil intentions towards Islam. At the same time I believe that it is necessary for those having specialized knowledge of 'irfan and of the profound teachings of Islam to undertake an objective research and disinterested study of the conformity of the .issues of 'irfan with Islamic teachings

Shari'ah, Tariqah and Haqiqah

One of the important points of contention between the 'urafa' and the non-'urafa', especially the jurisprudents, is

the particular teaching of 'irfan regarding the Shari'ah, the Tariqah (the Way) and the Haqiqah (the Reality). Both agree in saying that the Shari'ah, the body of Islamic laws, is based upon a series of realities and beneficial objectives. The jurisprudents generally interpret these goals to consist of certain things that lead the human being to felicity, that is, to the highest possible level of benefit from God's material and spiritual favors to man. The 'urafa', on the other hand, believe that all the paths end in God, and that all goals and realities are merely the means, causes and agencies that .impel the human being towards God

The jurisprudents say only that underlying the laws of the Shariah is a series of benign objectives, that these objectives constitute the cause and spirit of the Shari'ah, and that the only way of attaining these objectives is to act in accordance with the Shari'ah. But the 'urafa' believe that the realities and objectives underlying the laws of the Shari'ah are of the nature of stations and stages on the human being's ascent .towards God and in the process of man's access to the ultimate reality

The 'urafa' believe that the esoteric aspect of the Shari'ah is the Way, the Tariqah, at whose end is the Reality (al-Haqiqah), that is tawhid (in the sense mentioned earlier), which is a stage acquired after the obliteration of the 'arif's self and his egoism. Thus ,the gnostic believes in three things: the Shari'ah, the Tariqah

and the Haqiqah, and that the Shari'ah is the means to, or the shell of the Tariqah, and .the Tariqah again is the means to or the shell of the kernel of Haqiqah

We have explained how the jurisprudents view Islam in the lectures on kalam.[۱] They believe that the Islamic teachings can be grouped into three branches. The first of these is kalam, which deals with the principal doctrines (usul al-'aqa'id). In matters related to the doctrines it is necessary for the human being to acquire, through .reason, shakeless belief and faith

The second branch is ethics (akhlaq). It sets forth the instructions about one's duty in .regard to ethical virtues and vices

The third branch, fiqh, deals with the laws (ahkam), which relate to our external .actions and behavior

These three branches of Islamic teachings are separate from each other. The branch of kalam is related to thought and reason; the branch of akhlaq is related to the self, its faculties and habits; and the branch of fiqh is related to the organs and limbs of the .body

However, on the subject of doctrines, the 'urafa' do not consider merely mental and rational belief to be sufficient. They claim that whatever is to be believed in must be .arrived at; one must strive to remove the veils between oneself and those realities

Similarly, with respect to the second branch they do not consider ethics to be adequate on account of its being static and limited. In place of

---

۱- - Murtada Mutahhari, An Introduction to Ilm al Kalam, transl. By Ali Quli Qarai, Al-Tawhid, vol II No. ۲

a philosophical ethics, they suggest a spiritual methodology (sayr wa suluk) with its .particular composition

Finally, in the third branch, they have no criticisms; only in specific instances do they .express opinions that could, possibly, be taken as being opposed to the laws of fiqh

These three branches are, therefore, termed by the 'urafa' as Shari'ah, Tariqah, and Haqiqah. Yet they believe that in exactly the same way as the human being cannot be divided into three sections, that is, the body, the self, and reason, which are not separate from each other and form an indivisible whole of which they constitute inward and outward aspects, so it is with the Shari'ah, the Tariqah, and the Haqiqah. One is outward shell, another is inward kernel, and the third is the kernel of the kernel. There is a difference, however, in that the 'urafa' consider the stages of human existence to be more than three; that is, they believe in a stage that transcends the .domain of reason. God willing, this shall be explained later

:The Origins of Islamic 'Irfan

In order to understand any discipline or science, it is essential to study its history and the historical developments associated with it. One must also be acquainted with the personalities who have originated or inherited it and with its source books. In this .lecture, and the fourth one, we will turn to these matters

The first issue to arise is whether Islamic 'irfan is a discipline that originated in the Islamic tradition, such as

fiqh, usul al-fiqh, tafsir, and 'ilm al-hadith. That is, is it one of those disciplines that were originated by the Muslims who, having received in Islam the original inspiration, sources and raw material, developed them by discovering their rules and principles? Or is it one of those sciences that found their way into the Islamic world from outside, like medicine and mathematics, which were then developed further by the Muslims in ?the environment of Islamic civilization and culture? Or is there a third possibility

The 'urafa' themselves maintain the first of these alternatives, and are in no way ready to admit any other. Some orientalists, however, have insisted - and some still insist - on the second view that 'irfan and its subtle and sublime ideas have come into the Islamic world from outside. Sometimes they maintain a Christian origin for it, and claim that mysticism in Islam is the result of early contact of the Muslims with .Christian monks

At other times they claim it to be a result of the Persians' reaction against Islam and the Arabs. Then again sometimes they make it entirely a product of Neo-Platonism, which itself was composed of the ideas of Plato, Aristotle and Pythagoras, influenced by Alexandrian gnosticism and the views and beliefs of Judaism and Christianity. Sometimes they claim it to be derived from Buddhism. Similarly, the opponents of 'irfan in the Islamic world also strive to show the whole of 'irfan and sufism as being alien to Islam, and for this

.purpose they too maintain that gnosis has non-Islamic origins

A third view admits that 'irfan, whether practical or theoretical, draws its primary inspiration and material from Islam itself; having taken this material, it has tried to give it a structure by devising certain rules and principles and in this process has also been influenced by external currents, specially the ideas of scholasticism and philosophy, especially of the Illuminationist school. Now there are a number of questions which arise in this context. Firstly, to what extent have the 'urafa' been successful in developing correct rules and principles for structuring their material? ?Have the 'urafa' been as successful in carrying this out as the jurisprudents

To what extent have the 'urafa' felt themselves bound not to deviate from the actual principles of Islam? And, similarly, to what extent has 'irfan been influenced by the ideas of outside traditions? Has 'irfan assimilated these external ideas by shaping them in its particular moulds, and used them in its development? Or, contrarily, have ?the waves of these foreign currents carried away 'irfan in their flow

Each of these questions requires a separate study and careful research. But that which is certain is that 'irfan has derived its basic sources of inspiration from Islam .itself and from nowhere else. Let us consider this point

Those who accept the first view, and to some extent also those who take the second view, see Islam as being a simple religion, popular and unsophisticated, free of all sorts of mysteries

and difficult or unintelligible profundities. To them, the doctrinal system of Islam rests on tawhid (monotheism), which means that just as a house has a builder other than itself, so the world has a transcendent Creator other than itself. Also, the basis of man's relationship with the enjoyments of this world is, in their view, zuhd (abstinence). In their definition of zuhd, it means refraining from the ephemeral pleasures of this world in order to attain the everlasting enjoyments of the Hereafter. Besides these, there are a series of simple and practical rituals and laws that are handled by fiqh.

Therefore, in this group's view, that which the 'urafa' call tawhid is an idea that goes beyond the simple monotheism of Islam; for the 'arif's view of tawhid is existentialist monism in the sense that he believes that nothing exists except God, His Names, Attributes, and manifestations.

The 'arif's conception of the spiritual path (sayr wa suluk), likewise, they say, also goes beyond the zuhd enjoined by Islam, for the spiritual path of 'irfan involves a number of ideas and concepts - such as love of God, annihilation in God, epiphany - that are not to be found in Islamic piety.

Similarly, the 'arif's concept of the Tariqah goes beyond the Shari'ah of Islam; for the practice of the Tariqah involves matters unknown to fiqh.

Furthermore, in the view of this group, the pious among the Holy Prophet's Companions whom the 'urafa' claim to be their precursors were no more

than pious men. Their souls knew nothing of the spiritual path of 'irfan and its tawhid. They were simple otherworldly people who abstained from worldly pleasures and directed their attention to the Hereafter and whose souls were dominated by mixed feelings of fear and hope – fear of the punishment of Hell and hope of the rewards of .Paradise. That is all

In reality this view can in no way be endorsed. The primal sources of Islam are far more extensively richer than what this group – out of ignorance or knowingly – supposes. Neither the Islamic concept of tawhid is as simple and empty as they suppose, nor Islam limits man's spirituality to a dry piety, nor were the pious Companions of the Holy Prophet simple ascetics, nor is the Islamic code of conduct .confined to the actions of bodily limbs and organs

In this lecture, brief evidence will be produced that will suffice to show that Islam's fundamental teachings are capable of having inspired a chain of profound spiritual ideas, both in the theoretical and the practical realms of 'irfan. However, the question of the extent to which the Islamic mystics have used and benefited from Islam's fundamental teachings and the extent to which they may have deviated, is one that .we cannot go into in these short lectures

On the subject of tawhid, the Holy Quran never likens God and the creation to a builder and a house. The Quran identifies God as the Creator of the

world, stating at the same time that His Holy Essence is everywhere and with :everything

(Wither so ever you turn, there is the Face of God.... (۲:۱۱۵

(And We are nearer to him than the jugular vein. (۵۰:۱۶

(He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward; .... (۵۷:۳

Evidently, these kind of verses represent a call to the thinking minds to a conception of tawhid which goes beyond commonplace monotheism. A tradition of al-Kafi states that God revealed the opening verses of the Sura al-Hadid and the Sura al-'Ikhlas because He knew that in future generations there will emerge people who will think .profoundly about tawhid

As to the spiritual path of 'irfan, in which a series of stages leading to ultimate nearness to God are conceived, it suffices to take into account the Quranic verses which mention such notions as liqa 'Allah (meeting with God), ridwan Allah (God's good pleasure), or those which relate to revelation (wahy), ilham (inspiration), and the angels' speaking to others who are not prophets - for instance, Mary - and especially .(the verses relating to the Holy Prophet's Ascension (mi'raj; ۱۷:۱

In the Quran there is mention of the

commanding self' (al-nafs al-'ammarah; ۱۲:۵۳), the 'self-accusative self' (al-nafs al-' .(lawwamah; ۷۵:۲), and the 'contented self' (al-nafs al-mutma'innah; ۸۹:۲۷

There is mention of 'acquired knowledge' (al-'ilm al-'ifadi) and inspired knowledge (al-:'ilm al-ladunni; ۱۸:۶۵), and of forms of guidance resulting from spiritual struggle

And those who struggle in Us, We will surely guide them to Our paths

(۲۹:۶۹) ...

Mention is made in the Quran of the purification of the self, and it is counted as one of :the things leading to salvation and deliverance

By the self) ... verily he who purifies it has succeeded, while he who corrupts it has) (indeed failed. (۹۱:۷-۱۰

There is also repeated mention there of love of God as a passion above all other .human loves and attractions

The Quran also speaks about all the particles of creation glorifying and praising God (۱۷:۴۴), and this is phrased in a way to imply that if one were to perfect his understanding, he would be able to perceive their praise and magnification of God. Moreover, the Quran raises the issue of the Divine breath in relation to the nature and .(constitution of the human being (۳۲:۹

This, and much more besides, is sufficient to have inspired a comprehensive and magnificent spirituality regarding God, the world, and man, particularly regarding his .relationship with God

As previously mentioned, we are not considering how the Muslim 'urafa' have made use of these resources, or whether their utilization has been correct or incorrect. We are considering whether there did exist such great resources that could have provided effective inspiration for 'irfan in the Islamic world. Even if we suppose that those usually classed as 'urafa' could not make proper use of them, others who are .not classed as such did make use of them

In addition to the Quran, the traditions, sermons, supplications (du'a'), polemical dialogues (ihtijajat)* and

the biographies of the great figures of Islam, all show that the spiritual life current in the early days of Islam was not merely a lifeless type of asceticism blended with a worship performed in the hope of the rewards of Paradise. Concepts and notions are found in the traditions, sermons, supplications, and polemical dialogues that stand at a very high level of sublimity. Similarly, the biographies of the leading personalities of the early days of Islam display many instances of spiritual ecstasy, visions, occurrences, inner insights, and burning spiritual love. We will now relate an example .of it

Al-Kafi relates that one morning after performing the dawn prayer, a young man (Harithah ibn Malik ibn Nu'man al-'Ansari) caught the Prophet's eye. Lean and pale, his eyes sunken, he gave the impression of being unaware of his own condition and of being unable to keep his balance. “How are you?” inquired the Prophet . “I have attained certain faith,” the youth replied. “What is the sign of your certainty?” the .Prophet asked

The youth replied that his certainty had immersed him in grief. It kept him awake at night (in worship) and thirsty by day (in fasting), and had separated him from the world and its matters so completely that it seemed to him as if he could see the Divine Throne already set up (on the Judgement Day) to settle the people's accounts, that he together with all of mankind were raised from the dead. He said that it

seemed to him that even at that moment he could see the people of Paradise enjoying its bounties, and the people of hell suffering torments and he could hear the .roar of its flames

The Holy Prophet (S) turned to his Companions and told them, “This is a man whose heart has been illuminated with the light of faith by God”. Then he said to the youth, “Preserve this condition you are in, and do not let it be taken away from you.” “Pray for ”.me,” the youth replied, “that God may grant me martyrdom

Not long after this encounter, a battle took place, and the youth, taking part, was .granted his wish and was martyred

The life, utterances and prayers of the Holy Prophet (S) are rich with spiritual enthusiasm and ecstasy, and full of the indications of gnosis, and the 'urafa' often rely .on the Prophet's supplications as reference and evidence for their views

Similarly, the words of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (A), to whom nearly all the 'urafa' and sufis trace the origin of their orders, are also spiritually inspiring. I wish to draw attention to :two passages of the Nahj al-balaghah. In Khutbah No. ۲۲۲, 'Ali states

Certainly, God, the glorified, has made His remembrance the means of burnishing the hearts, which makes them hear after deafness, see after blindness, and makes them submissive after unruliness. In all the periods and times when there were no prophets, there have been individuals with whom God - precious are

.His bounties - spoke in whispers through their conscience and intellects

:In Khutbah No. ۲۲۰, speaking about the men of God, he says

He revives his intellect and mortifies his self, until his body becomes lean and his coarseness turns into refinement. Then an effulgence of extreme brightness shines forth for illuminating the path before him, opening all the doors and leading him straight to the gate of safety and the (permanent) abode. His feet, carrying his body, become fixed in the position of safety and comfort on account of that which engages .his heart and on having won the good pleasure of his Lord

The Islamic supplications, especially those of the Shi'ah, are also replete with spiritual teachings. The Du'a' Kumayl, the Du'a' Abi Hamzah, the supplications of al-Sahifat al-Kamilah and the group of supplications called Sha'baniyyah, all contain the most .sublime spiritual ideas

With the existence of all these resources in Islam, is there a need for us to search for ?the origin of Islamic 'irfan elsewhere

This reminds us of the case of Abu Dharr al-Ghifari and his protest against the tyrants of his time and his vocal criticism of their practices. Abu Dharr was severely critical of the favoritism, partisan politics, injustice, corruption and tyranny of the post-Prophetic era in which he lived. This led him to suffer torture and exile, and finally it .was in exile, deserted and alone, that he passed away from this world

A number of orientalists have raised the question of what motivated

Abu Dharr to act as he did. They are in search of something foreign to the world of .Islam to explain his behavior

George Jurdaq, a Lebanese Christian, provides an answer to these orientalists in his book al-'Imam 'Ali, sawt al-'adalah al-'insaniyyah (Imam 'Ali, the Voice of Human Justice). There he says that he is amazed at those who wish to trace Abu Dharr's mentality to an extra-Islamic source. He says it is as if they see someone standing at the side of a sea or river with a pitcher of water in his hands, and begin to wonder from which pool he has filled his pitcher, and then, completely ignoring the nearby sea .or river, go off in search of a pool or pond to explain his full pitcher of water

What other source other than Islam could have inspired Abu Dharr? Which source could have the power of Islam in inspiring the likes of Abu Dharr to rise against the ?tyrants of this world such as Mu'awiyah

Now we see a similar pattern in regard to 'irfan. The orientalists are in search of a non-Islamic source of inspiration of 'irfan, while they completely overlook the great .ocean of Islam

Can we really be expected to overlook all these resources - the Holy Quran, the traditions, the sermons, the polemical dialogues, the supplications, and the biographies - simply in order to give credence to the view of a group of orientalists ?and their Eastern followers

Formerly, the orientalists took

great pains to project the origins of Islamic 'irfan as lying outside the original teachings of Islam. Lately, however, such individuals as the English R.A. Nicholson and the French Louis Massignon, after having made extensive studies in Islamic 'irfan, without being unacquainted with Islam in general, have expressly admitted that the .principal sources of 'irfan are the Quran and the Prophet's Sunnah

We will conclude this lecture by quoting a passage by Nicholson from the book The :Legacy of Islam

Though Muhammad left no system of dogmatic or mystical theology, the Qur'an) contains the raw materials of both. Being the outcome of feeling than reflection, the Prophet's statements about God are formally inconsistent, and while Muslim scholastics have embodied in their creed the aspect of transcendence, the Sufis, following his example, have combined the transcendent aspect with that of immanence, on which, though it is less prominent in the Qur'an, they naturally lay (greater emphasis.)(۱

;(Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth" (xxiv:۳۵"

;(He is the first and the last and the outward and the inward" (lvii:۳"

;(there is no god but He; everything is perishing except His Face" (xxviii:۸۸"

;(Have breathed into him (man) of My spirit" (xv:۲۹"

Verily, We have created man and We know what his soul suggests to him, for We are " ;(nigher unto him than the neck-artery" (۱:۱۵

;(wheresoever ye turn, there is the Face of Allah" (ii:۱۱۴"

he to whom Allah giveth no light hath no"

R.A Nicholson, Mysticism in The Legacy of Islam, London ۱۹۳۱ ed. by Sir Thomas - ۱ Arnold and Alfred Guillaume pp. ۲۱۱-۲۱۲

.(light at all" (xxiv:۴۰

Surely the seeds of mysticism are here. And, for the early Sufis, the Qur'an is not only the Word of God: it is the primary means of drawing near to Him. By fervent prayer, by meditating profoundly on the text as a whole and in particular on the mysterious passages (xvii:۱; liii:۱-۱۸) concerning the Night journey and Ascension, they (endeavored to reproduce the Prophet's mystical experience in themselves.(۱

The doctrine of a mystical union imparted by divine grace goes beyond anything in the Qur'an, but is stated plainly in apocryphal traditions of the Prophet, e.g. God said, "My servant draws nigh unto Me by works of supererogation, and I love him; and when I love him, I am his ear, so that he hears by Me, and his eye, so that he sees by Me, and (his tongue, so that he speaks by Me, and his hand, so that he takes by Me."(۲

As repeatedly said before, we are not concerned here with the question whether the 'urafa' have succeeded in correctly utilizing the inspiration provided by Islam; our purpose was to consider whether the main source of their inspiration lay within Islam .or outside it

A Brief History

The previous lecture dealt with the question of locating the principal origin of Islamic 'irfan, that is, whether there exists in the teachings of Islam and the lives of the Holy Prophet and the Imams a precedent that could have inspired a series of profound and ,subtle mystical ideas

---

Ibid -۱

Ibid -۲

on a theoretical level, and which could have prompted spiritual enthusiasm and mystical elation on a practical level. The answer to this question was seen to be .positive. Now we will continue this discussion

The genuine teachings of Islam and the lives of its spiritual leaders, so rich with spirituality and spiritual splendor, which have provided the inspiration for profound spirituality in the Islamic world, are not encompassed by that which is termed as 'irfan or sufism. However, it is beyond the scope of these lectures to discuss other parts of .Islamic teachings that do not bear this name

We will continue our discussion on the branch that is labeled as 'irfan or sufism, and obviously the limited scope of these lectures does not permit us to go into a critical research. Here we will try to give an outline of the currents and events that have occurred within this branch. For this purpose, it appears to be appropriate that we begin by providing a simple history of 'irfan or Sufism from the beginnings of Islam until at least the ۱۰th/۱۶th century, before turning, so far as is practical in a venture .such as this, to an analysis of the issues of 'irfan

What seems certain is that in the early era of Islam, that is throughout the ۱st/۷th century at least, there existed no group amongst the Muslims known as 'urafa' or .sufis. The name sufi was first used in the ۲nd/۸th century

The first person to be called by

the name sufi is Abu Hashim al- Kufi. He lived in the ۲nd/۸th century and he it was who first built at Ramlah, in Palestine, a hospice for worship by a group of ascetically-minded Muslims.(۱) The date of Abu Hashim's death is not known, but he was the .teacher of Sufyan al-Thawri who died in ۱۶۱/۷۷۷

Abu al-Qasim Qushayri, himself an eminent 'arif and sufi, states that the name sufi had appeared before the year ۲۰۰/۸۱۵. Nicholson also states that the name appeared towards the end of the ۲nd century H. From a tradition contained in kitab al-ma'ishah (vol. V) of al-Kafi, it appears that a group - Sufyan al-Thawri and a number of others - existed in the time of al-'Imam al-Sadiq (A) (that is to say, during the first half of the .۲nd century H.) who were already called by this name

If Abu Hashim al-Kufi was the first to be called sufi, then, since he was the teacher of Sufyan al-Thawri who died in ۱۶۱/۷۷۷, this name was first used during the first half of the ۲nd century H., not at its end (as Nicholson and others have stated). Nor does there appear to be any doubt that the reason for the name being sufiyyah was their wearing of wool (sufi: wool). Due to their asceticism, the sufis abstained from wearing fine garments, and instead followed a practice of wearing clothes made of coarse .wool

As for the date this group first began to call themselves

Dr Qasim Ghani, Tarikh e Tasawwuf Dar Islam, p. ۱۹ -۱

urafa', again there is no precise information. All that is certain, as confirmed by the' remarks quoted of Sari Saqati (d. ٢۴٣/٨۶٧)(١) is that the term was current in the third century H. However, in the book al-Luma' of Abu Nasr al-Sarraj al-Tusi, one of the reliable texts of 'irfan and sufism, a phrase is quoted of Sufyan al-Thawri which gives the impression that this term appeared sometime in the second century. (٢)

At all events, there was no group known as sufis during the first century H. This name appeared in the ٢nd century H., and it seems that it was during the same century that the sufis emerged as a particular group, not in the third century as is the belief of some people.(٣)

However, even though no special group existed in the first century by the name of 'urafa' or sufis or any other name, it does not imply that the eminent Companions were merely pious and ascetic persons and that all of them led lives of simple faith devoid of spiritual depth. Perhaps it is true that some of the pious Companions knew nothing more beyond mere piety and worship, yet a group of them possessed a powerful spiritual life. Nor were they all of the same level. Even Salman and Abu Dharr were not of the same degree. Salman enjoyed a degree of faith that Abu Dharr could not have withstood. Many traditions have come to us telling us:

If Abu Dharr knew what was in Salman's

١- Farid al Din al Attar, Tadhkirat al-awliya

٢- Abu Nasr al Sarraj, al-Luma, p. ۴٢٧

٣- Dr. Qasim Ghani, op. cit

(heart, he would (considering him a heretic) have killed him.(١)

Now we will list the different generations of the 'urafa' and sufis from the ٢nd/٨th to the ١٠/١۶th century.

Urafa' of the Second/Eighth Century'

١. Al-Hasan al-Basri

The history of what is termed as 'irfan, like kalam, begins with al-Hasan al-Basri (d. ١١٠/٧٢٨). He was born in ٢٢/۶۴٢ and lived for eighty-eight years, having spent nine-tenths of his life in the first century H.

Of course, al-Hasan al-Basri was never known by the term sufi, but there are three reasons for counting him amongst the sufis. The first is that he compiled a book called Ri'ayah li huquq Allah (Observance of the Duties to Allah)(٢), which can be recognized as the first book on sufism. A unique manuscript of this book exists at Oxford. Nicholson has this to say on the subject:

The first Muslim to give an experimental analysis of the inner life was Harith al-Muhasibi of Basrah ... 'The Path' (tariqah), as described by later writers, consists of acquired virtues (maqamat) and mystical states (ahwal). The first stage is repentance or conversion; then comes a series of others, e.g. renunciation, poverty, patience, trust in God, each being a preparation for the next.(٣)

Secondly, the 'urafa' themselves trace their orders back to al- Hasan al-Basri; and from him to 'Ali (A), such as the chain of the shaykhs of Abu Sa'id ibn Abi al-Khayr.(۴) Similarly, Ibn al-Nadim, in his famous al-Fihrist, traces the chain of Abu Muhammad Ja'far al-Khuldi back to al-Hasan al-Basri, stating that al-Hasan

---

١- Abbas al Qummi, Safinat al Bihar, under s-l-m

٢- Harith al Muhasibi, not Hasan al Basri

٣- Nicholson, op cit p. ٢١۴

Dr. Qasim Ghani, op cit p. ۴۶۲ -۴

.al-Basri had met seventy of the Companions who had fought at Badr

Thirdly, some of the stories related of al-Hasan al-Basri give the impression that he was in fact part of a group that in later times became known as sufis. We will relate .some of these stories when appropriate later on

Malik ibn Dinar .۲

He was one of those who took asceticism and abstinence from pleasure to the .extreme. Many stories are told about him in this regard. He died in the year ۱۳۰/۷۴۷

Ibrahim ibn Adham .۳

The famous story of Ibrahim ibn Adham resembles that of Buddha. It is said that he was the ruler of Balkh when something happened that caused him to repent and .enter the ranks of the sufis

Urafa' attach great importance to this man, and a very interesting tale is told about' .him in Rumi's Mathnawi. He died around the year ۱۶۱/۷۷۷

Rabi'ah al-'Adawiyyah .۴

This woman is one of the wonders of her time (d. ۱۳۵/۷۵۲ or ۱۸۵/۸۰۱). She was named Rabi'ah because she was the fourth daughter of her family (rabi'ah: fem. gender of fourth). She is not to be confused with Rabi'ah al-Shamiyyah, who was also a mystic .and a contemporary of Jami and lived in the ۹th/۱۵th century

Lofty sayings and soaring mystical verses are recorded of Rabi'ah al-'Adawiyyah,' and .(she is noted for amazing spiritual states (halat

Abu Hashim al-Sufi of Kufah .۵

The date of this man's death is unknown. All that we can say is that he was the teacher of Sufyan al- Thawri; who died in ۱۶۱/۷۷۷. He appears to

be the first person to have been called sufi. Sufyan says about him: “If it were not for ”.('Abu Hashim I would not have known the precise details of ostentation (riya

Shaqiq al-Balkhi .۶

He was the pupil of Ibrahim ibn Adham. According to the author of Rayhanat al-'adab, and others quoted in Kashf al-ghummah of 'Ali ibn 'Isa al-'Arbili and Nur al-'absar of al-Shablanji, he once met al-'Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (A) and has given an account of .the Imam's great station and miracles. Shaqiq died in ۱۹۴/۸۱۰

Ma'ruf al-Karkhi .۷

He is one of the famous 'urafa'. It is said that his parents were Christian and that he .became a Muslim at the hands of al- 'Imam al-Rida (A), learning much from him

The lines of many orders, according to the claims of the 'urafa', go back to Ma'ruf, and through him to al-'Imam al-Rida, and through al- 'Imam al-Rida to the preceding Imams and thus to the Prophet himself. This chain is therefore termed the 'golden .chain' (silsilat al-dhahab). Those known as the Dhahabiyyun generally make this claim

Al-Fudayl ibn 'Iyad .۸

Originally from Merv, he was an Iranian of Arab descent. It is said of him that at first he was a highwayman, and that as he was preparing to carry out a robbery one night he heard the voice of his potential victim, reciting the Quran. This had such an effect on him that he experienced a change of heart and repented. The book Misbah al-Shariah is attributed to him and it is said to

consist of a series of lessons that he took from al-'Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (A). This book is considered reliable by an erudite scholar of traditions of the last century, the late Hajj Mirza Husayn Nuri, in the epilogue to his Mustadrak al-Wasa'il. Fudayl died in .۱۸۷/۸۰۳

Urafa' of the Third/Ninth Century'

(Abu Yazid al-Bistami (Bayazid .۱

One of the great mystics, it is said Bayazid was the first to speak openly of 'annihilation of the self in God' (fana fi 'Allah') and 'subsistence through God' (baqa' bi .('Allah

".He has said "I came forth from Bayazid-ness as a snake from its skin

His ecstatic ejaculations (shathiyyat) have led others to call him a heretic. However, the 'urafa' themselves consider him one of those given to mystical 'intoxication' (sukr), .that is, he uttered these words when he was beside himself in ecstasy

Abu Yazid died in ۲۶۱/۸۷۴ or ۲۶۴/۸۷۷. Some have claimed that he worked as a water carrier in the house of al-'Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (A). However, this claim is not .supported by history; Abu Yazid was not a contemporary of the Imam

Bishr ibn al-Harith al-Hafi .۲

.One of the famous sufis, he was another who led a corrupt life and then repented

In his book Minhaj al-karamah, al-'Allamah al-Hilli has related an account that depicts Bishr's repentance as being at the hands of al-'Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (A), and because at the moment of his repentance he was barefoot in the street, he became known as 'al- Hafi' (hafi=barefooted). However, others have given a different reason for his being known as

.al-Hafi

.Bishr al-Hafi (born near Merv c. ۱۵۰/۷۶۷) died in ۲۲۶/۸۴۰ or ۲۲۷/۸۴۱ in Baghdad

Sari al-Saqati .۳

One of the friends and companions of Bishr al-Hafi, Sari al-Saqati was one of those who bore affection for the creatures of God and of those who preferred others above .themselves

In his book Wafayat al-'a'yan, Ibn Khallikan writes that Sari once said, "It is thirty years that I have been seeking forgiveness for one phrase, Praise be Allah's, that I allowed to pass my lips." When asked to explain he replied, "One night the bazaar caught fire, and I left my house to see if the fire had reached my shop. When I heard that my shop was safe, I said, 'Praise be Allah's'. Instantly I was brought to my senses with the realization that, granted my shop was unharmed, should I not have been "?'thinking about others

:Sa'di is referring to this same story (with slight variations) where he says

One night someone's chimney kindled a fire, And I heard that half of Baghdad had burnt down. One said, thank God that in the smoke and ashes, My shop has not been damaged. A man who had seen the world replied, O selfish man, Was your grief for yourself and no other? Would you be satisfied that a town should burn down by fire, If ?your own dwelling were left unscathed

Sari was the pupil and disciple (murid) of Ma'ruf al-Karkhi, and the teacher and maternal uncle of Junayd of Baghdad. Sari has

many sayings on mystical unity (tawhid), love of God and other matters. It was also he who said: “Like the sun, the 'arif shines on all the world; like the earth, he bears the good and evil of all; like water, he is the source of life for every heart; and like fire he gives his warmth to all and sundry.” Sari died in ۲۵۳/۸۶۷ at the age of ninety-eight.

۴. Harith al-Muhasibi

He was one of the friends and companions of Junayd. He was called 'al-muhasibi' due to his great diligence in the matter of self-observation and self-reckoning (muhasabah). He was a contemporary of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who, being an opponent of 'ilm al-kalam, rejected Harith al-Muhasibi for entering into theological debates, and this led to the people avoiding him. Born in Basrah in ۱۶۵/۷۸۱, he died in ۲۴۳/۸۵۷.

۵. Junayd of Baghdad

Originally from Nahaw and, the 'urafa' and sufis have given Junayd the title Sayyid al-Ta'ifah, just as the Shi'ah jurisprudents call al-Shaykh al-Tusi Shaykh al-Ta'ifah.

Junayd is counted as one of the moderate mystics. The kind of ecstatic ejaculations uttered by others were never heard from his lips. He did not even put on the usual dress of the sufis, and dressed like scholars and jurisprudents. It was suggested to him that for the sake of his associates he should wear the sufi dress. He replied: “If I thought clothes were of any importance I would make an outfit of molten iron, for the call of truth is that:

There is no significance

.in the (sufi) cloak, Importance lies only in the (inward) glow

Junayd's mother was the sister of Sari Saqati and Junayd became his pupil and disciple. He was also the pupil of Harith al-Muhasibi. It seems that he died in Baghdad .in ۲۹۸f۹۱۰ at the age of ninety

Dhu al-Nun al-Misri .۶

An Egyptian, he was the pupil in jurisprudence of the famous jurisprudent Malik ibn Anas. Jami has called him the leader of the sufis. He it was who first began to use symbolic language and to explain mystical matters through the use of a symbolic .terminology which only the elect could understand

Gradually this became the standard practice, and mystical concepts were expressed in the form of love-poetry (ghazal) and symbolic expressions. Some believe that Dhu al-Nun also introduced many Neoplatonic ideas into 'irfan and sufism.(۱) Dhu al-Nun .died in ۲۴۶/۸۶۰ in Cairo

Sahl ibn 'Abd Allah al-Tustari .۷

He is one of the great 'urafa' and sufis. A sect of gnostics who consider the main principle of spirituality to be combatting the self is named 'Sahliyyah' after him. He (associated with Dhu al-Nun of Egypt at Mecca. He died in Basrah in ۲۸۲/۸۹۵. (۲

Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj .۸

Now famous simply as al-Hallaj, he is one of the most controversial mystics of the Islamic world. The shathiyyat uttered by him are many, and he was accused of apostasy and claiming divinity. The jurisprudents pronounced him an apostate and he was crucified during the reign of the 'Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir. The 'urafa' themselves accuse him of disclosing spiritual secrets. Hafiz has this to say

---

Ibid, p. ۵۵ -۱

Abu Abd al Rahman al Sulami, Tabqat al sufiyyah, p. ۲۰۶ -۲

:about him

,He said, that friend, who was raised high on the cross

.His crime was that he used to reveal secrets

Some consider him no more than a juggler, but the 'urafa' themselves absolve him and say that the statements of al-Hallaj and Bayazid that gave the impression of .'unbelief were made when they were beside themselves in the state of 'intoxication

(Al-Hallaj is remembered by the 'urafa' as a martyr. He was executed in ٣٠٩/٩١٣. (١

Urafa' of the Fourth/Tenth Century'

Abu Bakr al-Shibli .١

A pupil and disciple of Junayd of Baghdad and one who had met al-Hallaj, al-Shibli is one of the famous mystics. He was originally from Khurasan. In the book Rawdat al-jannat, and in other biographies, many mystical poems and sayings have been .recorded of him

Khawajah 'Abd Allah al-'Ansari has said: "The first person to speak in symbols was Dhu al-Nun of Egypt. Then came Junayd and he systematized this science, extended it, and wrote books on it. Al-Shibli, in his turn, took it to the pulpit." Al-Shibli; died in .٣٣٤/٨٤۶ at the age of ٨٧

Abu 'Ali al-Rudbari .٢

He traced his descent to Nushirwan and the Sasanids, and was a disciple of Junayd. He studied jurisprudence under Abu al-'Abbas ibn Shurayh, and literature under Tha'lab. Due to his versatile knowledge, he was called the 'collector of the Law, the Way, and the Reality' (jami' al-Shari'ah wa al-Tariqah wa al-Haqiqah). He died in .٣٢٢/٩٣٤

Abu Nasr al-Sarraj al-Tusi .٣

Abu Nasr al-Sarraj is the author of the book al-Luma', one of the principal, ancient and

reliable texts of 'irfan and

Authors work Ilal e girayeh be maddehgari -۱

sufism. Many of the shaykhs of the sufi orders were his direct or indirect pupils. He .passed away in ۳۷۸/۹۸۸ in Tus

Abu Fadl ibn al-Hasan al-Sarakhsi .۴

He was the pupil and disciple of Abu Nasr al-Sarraj, and the teacher of Abu Sa'id ibn .Abi al-Khayr. He was a mystic of great fame. He died in ۴۰۰/۱۰۰۹

Abu 'Abd Allah al-Rudbari .۵

He was the son of Abu 'Ali al-Rudbari's sister. He is counted as one of the mystics of .Damascus and Syria. He died in ۳۶۹/۹۷۹

Abu Talib al-Makki .۶

The fame of Abu Talib al-Makki rests largely on the book he authored on 'irfan and sufism, Qut al-qulub. This book is one of the principal and earliest texts of 'irfan and .sufism. He passed away in ۳۸۵/۹۹۵ or ۳۸۶/۹۹۶

Urafa' of the Fifth/Eleventh Century'

Shaykh Abu al-Hasan al-Khurqani .۱

One of the most famous 'urafa', the 'urafa' relate amazing stories about him. Amongst these is one according to which he would go to the grave of Bayazid and converse :with his spirit, taking his advice in solving his difficulties. Rumi says

After many years had passed since the death of Bayazid Bu'l-Hasan appeared. Now and then he would go and sit By the side of his grave in his presence, Until came the spirit of his shaykh, And as soon as he uttered his problem, it was solved

Rumi has remembered Shaykh Abu al-Hasan a lot in his Mathnawi, which shows his devotion and attachment to him. It is said that he met with Abu 'Ali Sina, the philosopher, and with Abu Sa'id ibn Abi al- Khayr, the famous 'arif. He died

.in ۴۲۵/۱۰۳۳-۳۴

Abu Sa'id ibn Abi al-Khayr .۲

One of the most famous of all mystics, Abu Sa'id ibn Abi al-Khayr is also one of those most noted for their spiritual states (halat). When once asked the definition of tasawwuf, he replied: "Tasawwuf is that you give up whatever is on your mind, give away whatever is in your hand, and to give over yourself to whatever you are capable ".of

He met with Abu 'Ali Sina. One day Abu 'Ali participated in a meeting at which Abu Sa'id was preaching. Abu Sa'id was speaking about the necessity of deeds, and about :(obedience and disobedience to God. Abu 'Ali recited these verses (ruba'i

,We are those who have befriended your forgiveness

.And seek riddance from obedience and disobedience

,Wherever your favour and grace is to be found

.Let the not-done be like the done, the done like the not-done

:Abu Sa'id immediately replied

,O you who have done no good, and done much bad

,And then aspire after your own salvation

Do not rely on forgiveness, for never

.Was the not-done like the done, the done like the not-done

:The following ruba'i is also of Abu Sa'id

,Tomorrow when the six directions fade away

.Your worth will be the worth of your awareness

,Strive for virtue, for on the Day of Retribution

.You shall rise in the form of your qualities

.Abu Sa'id passed away in the year ۴۴۰/۱۰۴۸

Abu 'Ali al-Daqqaq al-Nishabururi .۳

He is considered one of those who combined in himself the

expertise of the Shari'ah and the Tariqah. He was a preacher and an exegete (mufassir) of the Quran. To such an extent did he use to weep while reciting supplications (munajat) that he was given the title 'the lamenting shaykh' (shaykh-e nawhahgar). He passed away in ۴۰۵/۱۰۱۴ or ۴۱۲/۱۰۲۱.

۴. Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn 'Uthman al-Hujwiri

He is the author of Kashf al-Mahjub, one of the famous sufi books and one which has recently been published. He died in ۴۷۰/۱۰۷۷.

۵. Khwajah 'Abd Allah al-'Ansari

A descendant of the great Companion of the Prophet, Abu Ayyub al-'Ansari, Khwajah 'Abd Allah is himself one of the most famous and pious of all 'urafa'. His fame rests largely on his elegant aphorisms, munajat, and ruba'iyyat.

Amongst his sayings is this:

When a child you are low, when a youth you are intoxicated, when old you are decrepit; so when will you worship God?

He has also said:

Returning evil for evil is the trait of a dog; returning good for good is the trait of a donkey; returning good for evil is the work of Khwajah 'Abd Allah al-'Ansari.

The following ruba'i is also his:

It is a great fault for a man to remain aloof,

Setting oneself above all the creation.

Learn thy lesson from the pupil of the eye,

That sees everyone but not itself.

Khwajah 'Abd Allah was born in Herat where he died and was buried in ۴۸۱/۱۰۸۸. For

.(this reason he is known as 'the Sage of Herat' (Pir-e Herat

Khwajah 'Abd Allah authored many books, the best-known of

which, Manazil al-sa'irin, is a didactic manual on sayr wa suluk. It is one of the most .well-written works of 'irfan, and many commentaries have been written on it

Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali .۶

One of the best-known scholars of Islam whose fame has penetrated the East and the West, he combined in his person the knowledge of the rational and traditional sciences (ma'qul wa manqul). He became head of the Nizamiyyah Academy in Baghdad and held the highest position of his age accessible to any scholar. However, feeling that neither his knowledge nor his position could satisfy his soul, he withdrew .from public life and engaged in disciplining and purifying his soul

He spent ten years in Palestine, far from all who knew him, and it was during this period that he became inclined towards 'irfan and sufism. He never again accepted any post or position. Following his period of solitary asceticism, he wrote his famous Ihya' 'ulum al-Din ('Reviving the Sciences of Religion'). He died in his home city of Tus .in the year ۵۰۵/۱۱۱۱

Urafa' of the Sixth/Twelfth Century'

Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamadani' .۱

Of the most enthusiastic of mystics, 'Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamadani was the disciple of Ahmad al-Ghazali's, younger brother of Muhammad, who was also a mystic. The author of many books, he also composed some brilliant poetry that, however, was not altogether free of theopathetic exclamations (shathiyyat). Charges of heresy were brought against him; he was executed, and his body burnt and his ashes cast to the .winds. He was killed around ۵۲۵-۵۳۳/ ۱۱۳۱-۱۱۳۹

Sanai Ghaznawi .۲

A famous poet, his verse

is loaded with profound mystic sentiments. Rumi, in his Mathnawi, has cited some of .his sayings and expounded them. He died around the middle of the ۶th/۱۲th century

Ahmad Jami .۳

Known as “Zhand-e Pil”, Jami is one of the most celebrated of 'urafa' and sufis. His tomb lies at Turbat-e Jam, near the border between Iran and Afghanistan, and is well-known. Following lines are among the verses he composed on fear (khawf) and :('hope (raja

Be not haughty, for the mount of many a mighty man

;Has been hamstrung among rocks in the desert

But neither despair, for even wine-drinking libertines

.Have suddenly arrived at the destination by a single song

:Similarly, on moderation between generosity and thrift he offers the following advice

,Be not like an adze, drawing all to yourself

;Nor like a plane, gaining nothing for your work

,In matters of livelihood, learn from the saw

.It draws some to itself, and lets some scatter

.Ahmad Jami died around the year ۵۳۶/۱۱۴۱

Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani' .۴

He is one of the most controversial figures of the Islamic world. To him is attributed .the Qadiriyyah order of sufis

His grave at Baghdad is well known and famous. He is amongst those from whom many supplications and high-flying sayings have been recorded. He was a sayyid .descended from al-'Imam al-Hasan (A). He died in ۵۶۰/۱۱۶۴ or ۵۶۱/۱۱۶۵

Shaykh Ruzbihan Baqli Shirazi .۵

He is known as Shaykh-e Shattah on account of his prolific theopathetic exclamations. In recent years some of his books have been published, mainly

.through the efforts of the orientalists. He died in ۶۰۶/۱۲۰۹

Urafa' of the Seventh/Thirteenth Century'

point

This century has produced some mystics of the highest stature. We will mention some :of them in a chronological order

Shaykh Najm al-Din Kubra .۱

One of the greatest and most celebrated of mystics, the chains of many orders go back to him. He was the pupil and disciple of Shaykh Ruzbihan, and was also his son-in-law. He had many pupils and disciples, amongst whom was Baha' al-Din Walad, the .father of Jalal al-Din Rumi

He lived in Khuwarizm (in the present day USSR) at the time of the Mongol invasions. Before his city was attacked, he was sent a message informing him that he could lead a party of his family and disciples out of the city to safety. Najm al-Din's reply was that, 'Throughout all the days of comfort I have lived alongside these people. Now that the day of difficulties has come I will not leave them.' He then manfully strapped on a sword and fought alongside the people of the city until he was martyred. This .happened in the year ۶۲۴/۱۲۲۷

Shaykh Farid al-Din al-'Attar .۲

One of the foremost of mystics, al- 'Attar has works both in verse and in prose. His book Tadhkirat al- 'awifya' on the lives and characters of the sufis and mystics - which begins with al-'Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (A) and ends with al-'Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (A) - is considered a source book of documentary significance, and great importance .is attached to it by the orientalists

Similarly, his work Mantiq

.al-tayr ('The Speech of the Birds') is a masterpiece of mystical literature

:Rumi, commenting about al-'Attar and Sana'i, says

,Attar was the spirit and Sana'i his two eyes'

.We are following in the steps of Sana'i and 'Attar

:Rumi has also said

,Attar passed through seven cities of love'

.While we are yet in the bend of a single lane

What Rumi means by the 'seven cities of love' are the seven valleys of which al-'Attar :speaks in his Mantiq al-tayr. Muhammad Shabistari in his Gulshan-e raz says

,I am not ashamed of my poetry

.For, the like of 'Attar a hundred centuries will not see

Al-'Attar was the pupil and disciple of Shaykh Majd al-Din of Baghdad, who was amongst the pupils and disciples of Shaykh Najm al-Din Kubra. He also benefited from the company of Qutb al-Din Haydar, another of the shaykhs of the age and one after .whom the town in which he is buried, Turbat-e Haydariyyah, was named

Al-'Attar lived during the time of the Mongol invasions, and died - some say at the .hands of the Mongols - around ۶۲۶-۲۸/۱۲۲۸-۱۲۳۰

Shaykh Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi .۳

He is the author of the celebrated 'Awarif al-ma'arif, an excellent text of 'irfan and .sufism

He claimed descent from Abu Bakr. It is said that he went each year to visit Makkah and al-Madinah. He had met and conversed with 'Abd al- Qadir al-Gilani. Amongst his disciples were the famous poets Shaykh Saidi and Kamal al-Din Isma'il al-'Isfahani.

:Sa'di had this to say about him

:My wise shaykh the murshid, Shihab, gave me two advices

,One, not to be egocentric

.The other, not to regard others with pessimism

This Suhrawardi is not the same as the famous philosopher known as Shaykh al-'Ishraq, who was killed around ۵۸۱-۵۹۰/۱۱۸۵-۱۱۹۴ in Aleppo, Syria. Suhrawardi the .gnostic died around the year ۶۳۲/۱۲۳۴

Ibn al-Farid al-Misri .۴

He is considered one of the mystics of the first rank. His mystical poetry, in Arabic, reaches the loftiest summits and is of the greatest elegance. His diwan (collection of poems) has been published several times and has been the subject of many distinguished commentaries. Of those who wrote a commentary on his work was 'Abd .al-Rahman Jami, a well-known mystic of the ninth century

The poetry of Ibn al-Farid in Arabic is comparable to that of Hafiz in Persian. Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi once suggested to him that he should write a commentary on his poems. Ibn al-Farid replied that the commentary of his poems was Ibn al-'Arabi's own .al-Futuhat al- Makkiyyah

Ibn al-Farid is of those who went through abnormal 'states' (ahwal). More often than not he was in an ecstatic state and it was in such states that many of his poems were .composed. He died in the year ۶۳۲/۱۲۳۴

:Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi .۵

One of the descendants of Hatim al-Ta'i, Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi was originally from Spain. Most of his iife, however, seems to have been spent in Makkah and Syria. He was a pupil of the sixth-century mystic Shaykh Abu Madyan al-Maghribi al-'Andalusi. Through one

intermediary link, the chain of his order goes back to the Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-.Gilani mentioned above

Muhyi al-Din, also known by the name Ibn al-'Arabi, is certainly the greatest mystic of Islam. No one else has been able to reach his level, neither before nor after him. Thus .(he is known by the sobriquet 'al-Shaykh al-'Akbar' (the Greatest Shaykh

Islamic mysticism, from the time of its first appearance, has made progress one century after another. Each century, as indicated above, produced great mystics who have developed 'irfan, always adding to its heritage. This advancement had always been gradual. But in the ۷th/۱۳th century with the appearance of Ibn al-'Arabi 'irfan .made a sudden leap and reached the summit of its perfection

.Ibn al-'Arabi took 'irfan to a stage it had never reached before

The foundations for the second branch of 'irfan, that is theoretical 'irfan and its attendant philosophy, were laid by Ibn al-'Arabi. In general, the mystics who came .after him ate the crumbs from his table

Besides bringing 'irfan into a new phase, Ibn al-'Arabi was one of the wonders of time. He was an amazing person, and this has led to wildly divergent views about him. Some consider him al-Wali al-Kamil (the Perfect Saint) and the Qutb al-'Aqtab (the Pole of Poles). Others degrade him so much as to regard him a heretic, calling him Mumit al-Din (the Killer of the Faith) or Mahi al-Din (the Effacer of the Faith). Sadr al-Muta'allihin (Mulla Sadra), the great

philosopher and Islamic genius, had the greatest respect for him, considering him far .greater than Ibn Sina or al-Farabi

Ibn al-'Arabi authored over two hundred books. Many of his works, or perhaps all of those whose manuscripts are extant (numbering about thirty), have been published. Of his most important books, one is his al-Futahat al-Makkiyyah, a colossal work that is a veritable encyclopedia of 'irfan. Another is his Fusus al-hikam which, although brief, is the most precise and most profound text of 'irfan. Numerous commentaries have been written on it, yet perhaps there have been no more than two or three .persons in any age who have been able to understand it

Ibn al-'Arabi passed away in ۶۳۸/۱۲۴۰ in the city of Damascus, where his grave is still .well known even today

۶. Sadr al-Din Qunawi:

He was the pupil, disciple and son of the wife of Ibn al-'Arabi. He was a contemporary of Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi and of Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi. He corresponded with Khwajah Nasir, who paid him great respect. Similarly, at Qunyah(in present day Turkey), there was perfect friendship and cordiality between him and Rumi. Qunawi used to lead the prayers and Rumi would pray behind him, and it has been said that .Rumi was his pupil

There is a story that when one day Rumi came to join Qunawi's circle, he raised himself from his special masnad and offered it to Rumi. Declining, Rumi said that he would have no excuse before God for taking Qunawi's seat. At

which Qunawi threw away the masnad, saying, if it did not suit Rumi it would not suit .him either

Qunawi provided the best exposition on the thought and ideas of Ibn al-'Arabi. In fact, without Qunawi it is possible that Ibn al-'Arabi would never have been understood. It was also through Qunawi that Rumi became aquainted with Ibn al-'Arabi and his school, and it seems that the reason for considering Rumi as having been Qunawi's pupil is that Ibn al-'Arabi's ideas are reflected in Rumi's Mathnawi and in his Diwan-e .Shams

Moreover, students of philosophy and 'irfan have used Qunawi's books as textbooks for the last six centuries. His three famous books are: Miftah al-ghayb, al-Nusus and al-FuQuk. Qunawi passed away in ۶۷۲/۱۲۷۳ (the year in which both Rumi and Khwajah .Nasir al-Din died) or in ۶۷۳/۱۲۷۴

۷. Mawlana Jalal al-Din Muhammad Balkhi Rumi:

Known in the East as Mawlawi and in the West as Rumi, author of the world famous Mathnawi, this man is one of the greatest geniuses the world and Islamic 'irfan have ever seen. He was descended from Abu Bakr. His Mathnawi is an ocean of wisdom and full of precise spiritual, social and mystic insights. He ranks amongst the foremost .Persian poets

Originally from Balkh, he left it with his father when still a child. Together they visited Makkah, and at Nishabur they met with Shaykh Farid al-Din al-'Attar. On leaving Makkah his father went to Qunyah and there they settled down. At first Rumi, being a scholar, engaged himself, like the

other scholars of his rank, in teaching, and he lived a respectable life. Then he met the famous mystic Shams-e Tabrizi. Rumi was magnetized by this man and at once gave everything up. His diwan of ghazal is named after Shams, and he has repeatedly made ardent mention of him in his Mathnawi. Rumi passed away in ۶۷۲/۱۲۷۳.

۸. Fakhr al-Din al-'Iraqi al-Hamadani:

A well-known poet of ghazal and a mystic, he was a pupil of Sadr al-Din Qunawi and a murid and protege of Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi. He passed-away in ۶۸۸/۱۲۸۹.

'Urafa' of the Eighth/Fourteenth Century:

۱. 'Ala' al-Dawlah Simnani:

He began as a secretarial official; then he gave up his post to enter the path of the 'urafa', giving up all his wealth in the way of God. He wrote many books, and held special beliefs in the field of theoretical 'irfan, which are discussed in several important texts of 'irfan. He passed away in ۷۳۶/۱۳۳۵. Amongst his disciples was the well-known poet Khwajawi Kirmani, who describes him thus:

Whoever flourishes upon the path of 'Ali,

Like Khidr, finds the springs of life.

Getting relief from the whisperings of the Devil,

He becomes like 'Ala ' al-Dawlah Simnani.

۲. 'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani:

Of the scholars of the eighth century 'irfan, 'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani wrote commentaries on the Fusus of Ibn al- 'Arabi and the Manazil al-sa'irin of Khwajah 'Abd Allah. Both of these have been published and are referred to by scholars.

According to the author of Rawdat al-Jannat, in his account of Shaykh 'Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji, 'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani was eulogized by al-Shahid

al-Thani. He and 'Ala' al-Dawlah Simnani had heated discussions on theoretical issues .of 'irfan that had been raised by Ibn al- 'Arabi. He passed away in the year ۷۳۵/۱۳۳۴

:Khwajah Hafiz Shirazi .۳

Despite his world-wide fame, the details of Hafiz's life are not altogether clear. What is known is that he was a scholar, an 'arif, a hafiz of the Quran and an exegete of the :Book. He himself has repeatedly indicated this in his verses

,I haven 't seen more beautiful lines than yours, Hafiz

.By the Quran that you have in your breast

,Your love shall cry out if you, like Hafiz

.Recite the Quran memoriter with all the fourteen readings

,Of the memorizers of the world none like me has gathered

.Subtleties of wisdom with Quranic delicacies

In his poetry Hafiz speaks much of the pir-e tariqat (spiritual guide) and of the .murshid (master), yet it is not clear who was the teacher and guide of Hafiz himself

Hafiz's poetry attains to lofty mystical heights, and there are few people who are able to perceive his mystic subtleties. All the 'urafa' who came after him admit that he had indeed practically covered the lofty stages of 'irfan. Several important scholars have written commentaries on some of his verses. For example, a treatise was written by the well-known philosopher of the ninth century, Muhaqqiq Jalal al-Din Dawwani, on :the following verse

,My teachersaid: the pen of creation was subject to no error

Bravo the pure eyes that hide

(all defects.(1

(Hafiz passed away in ٧٩١/١٣٨٩.(٢

:Shaykh Mahmud Shabistari .۴

He is the creator of the sublime mystic poem Gulshan-e raz (The Garden of Secrets). This poem is counted as one of the loftiest works of 'irfan, and has immortalized the name of its author. Many commentaries have been written upon it, perhaps the best of which is that written by Shaykh Muhammad Lahiji, which has been published and is .available. Shabistari passed away about the year ٧٢٠/١٣٢٠

:Sayyid Haydar Amuli .۵

One of the erudite mystics, Sayyid Haydar Amuli is the author of the book Jami' al-'asrar (Collector of the Secrets), which is a precise work on the theoretical 'irfan of Ibn al-'Arabi. This book has lately been published. Another book by him is Nass al-nusus, .which is a commentary on Ibn al-'Arabi's Fusus al-hikam

He was a contemporary of the famous jurisprudent Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqin al-Hilli, but .the date of his death is not known

:Abd al-Karim Jilani' .۶

He is the author of the well-known book al-'Insan al-kamil ('The Perfect Man'). The concept of the perfect man is a subject first raised in its theoretical form by Ibn al-'Arabi, and has ever since occupied an important place in Islamic 'irfan. Ibn al-'Arabi's pupil and disciple, Sadr al-Din Qunawi, has discussed it fully in his Miftah al-ghayb and, as far as we know, at least two mystics have written whole books on the subject. One is 'Aziz al-Din Nasafi, a mystic of the latter half of the ٧th/١٣th century, the other being 'Abd al-Karim Jilani. Jilani

---

Can't find -١

۲- Hafiz is the most beloved figure of Persian poetry in Iran

.passed away in ۸۰۵/۱۴۰۲ at the age of thirty- eight

Urafa' of the Ninth/Fifteenth Century'

:Shah Ni'mat Allah Wali .۱

He claimed descent from the house of 'Ali. He is amongst the most famous of 'urafa' and sufis. The current Ni'mat- ullahi order is one of the most famous of sufi orders. His .grave near the city of Kirman is still a sufi shrine

It is said that he lived until the age of ninety-five, and died in the year ۸۲۰/۱۴۱۷, ۸۲۷/۱۴۲۴ or ۸۳۴/۱۴۳۰. He lived most of his life in the seventh century and associated with Hafiz .Shirazi. Much of his mystical poetry has survived

:Sa'in al-Din 'Ali Tarakeh Isfahani .۲

He is one of the most erudite of 'urafa'. He was deeply acquainted with the theoretical 'irfan of Ibn al-'Arabi. His book Tamhid al-qawa'id, which has been published and is available, is a tribute to his profound learning in 'irfan, and has been used as a source .by the scholars who have succeeded him

:Muhammad ibn Mamzah al-Fanari al-Rumi .۳

One of the scholars of the 'Uthmani empire, he distinguished himself in several fields. Author of many books, his fame in 'irfan is due to his book Misbah al-'uns. This is a commentary on Qunawi's Miftah al-ghayb. Although it is not every- one who can write a commentary and exposition on the books of Ibn al-'Arabi and his disciple Sadr al-Din Qunawi, the authorities in 'irfan to have followed him have all confirmed the value of this work. A lithograph print of this book with the hawashi of Aqa Mirza Hashim Rashti, ,a mystic of the last century

.has been published from Tehran

.Unfortunately due to bad print parts of the hawashi are unreadable

:Shams al-Din Muhammad Lahiji Nurbakhshi .۴

The author of a commentary on the Gulshan-e raz of Mahmud Shabistari, and a contemporary of Mir Sadr al-Din Dashtaki and 'Allamah Dawwani, he lived in Shiraz. These two, who were both outstanding philosophers of their age and, according to what Qadi Nur Allah Shushtari has written in his Majalis al-mu'minin, both accorded .Lahiji the greatest respect

Lahiji was the disciple of Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh, himself the pupil of Ibn Fahd al-Hilli. In his commentary on the Gulshan-e raz he traces his chain back from Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh to Ma'ruf al-Karkhi, thence to al-'Imam al-Rida and the preceding Imams and thus to the Holy Prophet himself (S). This he calls the 'Golden .(Chain' (silsilat al-dhahab

His fame rests largely on his commentary on the Gulshan-e raz, a commentary that itself is one of the loftiest of mystic texts. He began his writings, according to what he himself relates in the introduction to his commentary, in the year ۸۷۷/۱۴۷۲. The year of .his death is not precisely known. It seems to have been before ۹۰۰/۱۴۹۴

:Nur al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman Jami .۵

Point

Jami claimed descent from the well- known jurisprudent of the second century, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani. A powerful poet, he is considered the last great .mystic poet of the Persian language

At first he assumed the takhallus "Dashti", but since he was born in the locality of Jam, in the vicinity of Mashhad, and traced his spiritual descent to Ahmad

:Jami (Zhand-e Pil), he changed this to Jami. In his own words

My birthplace is Jam and the drops of my pen

(Are the draught of the cup of Shaykh al-Islam,(١

Thus in the pages of my poetry

.In two ways my pen-name is Jami

Jami was an accomplished scholar in the various fields of Arabic grammar and syntax, law, jurisprudence, logic, philosophy and 'irfan. His many books include a commentary on the Fusus al-hikam of Ibn al- 'Arabi, a commentary on the Luma'at of Fakhr al-Din 'Iraqi, a commentary on the Ta'iyyah of Ibn al-Farid, a commentary on the Qasidat al-Burdah in praise of the Holy Prophet (S), a commentary on the Qasidah Mimiyyah of Farazdaq in praise of al-'Imam 'Ali ibn al- Husayn, a book entitled al-Lawdyih, his Bahdristan, written in the style of Sa'di's Gulistans and a book Nafahat al-'uns on the .biographies of mystics

Jami was the disciple of Baha' al-Din Naqshaband, the founder of the Naqshabandi order. However, as in the instance of Muhammad Lahiji, who was a disciple of Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh, his academic standing is above that of his peer. Jami, even though he is counted as one of the followers of Baha' al-Din Naqshaband, achieved an .academic standing several degrees higher than that of Baha' al-Din

Thus in this brief history in which we are concentrating upon the academic side of 'irfan and not upon the development of the various orders, special mention has been made of Muhammad Lahiji and 'Abd al-Rahman

---

۱- Ahmad Jami was known as Shaykh al Isma

.Jami, rather than of the founders of their orders. Jami died in ۸۹۸/۱۴۹۲ at the age of ۸۱

This ends our brief history of 'irfan, covering the period from its beginnings until the close of the ۹th/۱۵th century. We chose to end at this point because, in our view, from the ۱۰th/۱۶th century onwards 'irfan took on a different form. Up until this time the learned and academic figures of 'irfan had all been members of regular sufi orders and the poles (aqtab) or masters of the sufi orders were great academic figures of 'irfan, to whom we owe the great mystic works. Around the beginning of the ۱۰th/۱۶th .century, however, this began to change

Firstly, the masters of the sufi orders were no longer possessed of the academic prominence of their forerunners. It may be said that from this time onwards formal sufism lost itself in customs, outward aspects, occasionally of an innovative nature .((bid'ah

Secondly, scholars who were not members of any formal sufi order began to show profound learning in the theoretical 'irfan of Ibn al-'Arabi, such that none from amongst the sufi orders could match them. Examples of such scholars are Sadr al-Muta'allihin of Shiraz (d. ۱۰۵۰/۱۶۴۰), his pupil Fayd Kashani (d. ۱۰۹۱/۱۶۸۰), and Fayd's own pupil Qadi Sa'id Qummi (d. ۱۱۰۳/۱۶۹۱). The knowledge of each of these of the theoretical 'irfan of Ibn al-'Arabi exceeded that of the poles or masters of any sufi order of their times, while they themselves were not attached to

any of the sufi orders. Moreover, this is a development that has continued down to the present day, as can be seen in the examples of the late Aqa-Muhammad Rida Qumsheh'i and the late Aqa Mirza Hashim Rashti. These two scholars of the last hundred years were both experts in the field of theoretical 'irfan, yet they too were .not members of any sufi order

On the whole, it can be said that it was from the time of Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi, who laid the foundations of theoretical 'irfan and philosophized 'irfan, that the seed of this .new development was sown

The above-mentioned Muhammad ibn Hamzah Fanari perhaps represented this type. But the new development that produced experts in the field of theoretical 'irfan who were either not at all devoted to practical 'irfan and its spiritual methodology, or, if they were - and to some extent most of them were - had nothing to do with any .formal sufi order, is perfectly discernible from the ۱۰th/۱۶th century onwards

Thirdly, since the ۱۰th/۱۶th century there have been individuals and groups devoted to the spiritual methodology of practical 'irfan, who had attained a very lofty spiritual standing indeed and yet they were not members of any of the formal sufi orders. They were either indifferent to the formal sufis or regarded them as being partially or .totally heretical

Amongst the characteristics of this new group of theoretical and practical 'urafa' - - who were also learned in law and jurisprudence

was a perfect loyalty to the shari'ah and a harmony between the rites of the path of progression and the rites of jurisprudence. This development has also its own history, .but here we have no opportunity to enter its details

point

In this section we intend to cover some of the special terms used in 'irfan. The 'urafa' have coined a large number of these terms, and without an acquaintance with them it is not possible to understand many of their ideas. In fact, one may draw a conclusion quite opposite to that intended. This is one of the characteristics of 'irfan. However, every branch of learning has its own set of terms, and this is a matter of necessity. The commonly understood meanings of words used are often unable to meet the .precise requirements of a science or discipline

Thus there is no option but that in every discipline certain words be selected to convey certain specific meanings, thus coining for the practitioners of that discipline a special .vocabulary. 'Irfan, too, is no exception to this general rule

Moreover, the 'urafa' insist that none but those initiated to the Path should know their ideas, because - in their view at least - none but the 'urafa' are able to understand these concepts. Thus the 'urafa' unlike the masters of other sciences and crafts, intentionally attempt to keep their meanings concealed so that the vocabulary they devised bears, in addition to the usual aspects of a terminology, also something of an .enigmatic aspect, leaving us to discover the enigma's secret

Furthermore, there is also a third aspect to be

occasionally taken into account, which increases the difficulty. This arises from the practice of some 'urafa' - at least those called the Malamatiyyah - who adopted an inverted form of ostentation (riya' ma'kus) in their discourses by cultivating ill fame instead of good name and fame amongst the people. This means that as opposed to those afflicted with the vice of ostentation (riya') who wish to make themselves appear better than they actually are, the 'urafa' practising self-reproach seek to be considered good by God and yet appear to the people as bad. In this way they seek to .cure themselves of all types of ostentation and egoism

It is said that the majority of the 'urafa' of Khurasan were Malamatiyyah. Some even believe that Hafiz was one. Such words as rindi (libertinism), la ubaligari (carelessness); qalandari (mendicancy), qallashi (pauperism) and the like signify indifference to creation, not to the Creator. Hafiz has spoken a lot on the subject of giving the impression of doing things that earn for one a bad name, while being :inwardly good and righteous. A few examples

.If an adherent of the path of love, worry not about bad name

.The Shaykh-e San'an had his robe in pawn at a gambling house

,Even if I mind the reproaches of claimants

.My drunken libertinism would leave me not

,The asceticism of raw libertines is like a village path

?But what good would the thought of reform do to one of worldwide ill fame like me

Through

,love of wine I brought my self-image to naught

.In order to destroy the imprint of self-devotion

,How happily passes the time of a mendicant, who in his spiritual journey

.Keeps reciting the Name of the Lord, while playing with the beads of his pagan rosary

However, Hafiz, elsewhere condemns the ostentatious cultivation of ill fame just as :he condemns sanctimoniousness

:My heart, let me guide thee to the path of salvation

.Neither boast of your profligacy, nor publicize your piety

:Rumi defends the Malamatiyyah in the following verses

,Behold, do not despise those of bad name

.Attention must be given to their secrets

,How often gold has been painted black

.For the fear of being stolen and lost

This issue is one of those over which the fuqaha' have found fault with the 'urafa'. Just as Islamic law condemns sanctimony (riya') - considering it a form of shirk - so does it condemn this seeking of reproach. It says that a believer has no right to compromise .his social standing and honour. Many 'urafa' also condemn this practice

In any case, this practice, which has been common amongst some 'urafa', led them to wrap their ideas in words which conveyed the very opposite of what they meant. .Naturally this makes the understanding of their intentions a good deal harder

Abu al-Qasim Qushayri, one of the leading figures of 'irfan, declares in his Risalah that the 'urafa' intentionally speak in enigmas, for they do not want the uninitiated to become aware of their

customs, states and their aims. This, he tells us, is because they are incapable of (being understood by the uninitiated.(١)

The technical terms of 'irfan are many. Some of them are related to theoretical 'irfan, that is to say, to the mystic world-view and its ontology. These terms resemble the terms of philosophy and are relatively recent. The father of all or most of them was Ibn al-'Arabi. It is extremely difficult to understand them. Amongst these are fayd al-'aqdas (the holiest grace), fayd al-muqaddas (the holy grace), al-wujud al-munbasit (the extending existence), haqq makhluq bi hadarat al- khams, maqam al-'ahadiyyah (the station of uniqueness), maqam al- wahidiyyah (the station of oneness), and so on.

The others are related to practical 'irfan, i.e. the sayr wa suluk of 'irfan. These terms, being of necessity related to the human being, are similar to the concepts of psychology and ethics. In fact they are part of a special type of psychology, a psychology that is indeed empirical and experimental. According to the 'urafa', philosophers - and for that matter psychologists, theologians and sociologists, let alone another class of scholars - who have not entered this valley to observe and study the self at close hand, have no right to make judgements on this subject.

The terms of practical 'irfan, as opposed to those of theoretical 'irfan, are ancient. They can be dated as early as the ٣rd/٩th century, from the time of Dhu al-Nun, Ba Yazid and Junayd. Here follows an

---

١- al-Qushayri, Risalah, p. ٣٣

exposition of some of these terms, according to definitions ascribed to them by .Qushayri and others

:(Waqt (Moment .۱

In the previous section we came across this word in a passage from Ibn Sina. Now let us turn to the 'urafa's definitions of it. The summary of what Qushayri has to say on this subject is that the concept of waqt is relative. Each state or condition that befalls the 'arif requires of him a special behavioural response. The particular state which .calls for a particular kind of behaviour is termed the Moment of a particular 'arif

Of course, another 'arif in the same state may have a different Moment, or the same 'arif in other circumstances may have a different Moment that will require of him a .different behaviour and a different responsibility

An 'arif must be familiar with these Moments; that is, he must recognize each state that descends upon him from the unseen, as well as the responsibilities which accompany it. The 'arif must also count his Moment as precious. Thus it is said that :"the 'arif is the son of the Moment". Rumi says

;The sufi is to be the son of the Moment, O friend

.Saying 'tomorrow ' is not a convention of the Way

The Arabic waqt has the same sense as dam (breath) and 'aysh-e naqd (cash of life or cash pleasure) of Persian poetry. Hafiz especially makes much mention of 'the cash of life' and 'counting the moment as precious.' Some of those who are either

uninformed or who wish to exploit Hafiz as an excuse for their own perverseness, suppose or pretend that Hafiz's use of such words is an invitation to material pleasures and indifference to the cares of the future, to the Hereafter and God – an .attitude which is known in the West as Epicureanism

The notions of 'counting the moment as precious' or 'ready pleasure' is of the recurring motifs of Hafiz's poetry. Perhaps he mentions it thirty times or more. It is obvious that since in his poetry Hafiz observes the 'urafa's practice of speaking in enigmas and symbols, many of his ambiguous verses may appear, on the surface, to present perverse ideas. In order to clear away any such delusions, one may count the .following verses as throwing light on others like them

?Whether I drink wine or not, what have I to do with anyone

.I am the guard of my secrets and gnostic of my moment

,Get up, let's take the sufi's cloak to the tavern

;And the theopathetic ravings to the bazaar of nonsense

,Let's be ashamed of these polluted woolens

;If the name of miracle be given to this virtue and skill

,If the heart fails to value the moment and does nothing

.Now much shame will the moments bring in for us

In a land, at morning time, a wayfarer

,Said this to a companion on the way

O sufi, the wine becomes pure

.When it remains in its bottle for forty days

God is disdainful of that woolen cloak a hundred times

;That has a hundred idols up its sleeve

,I see not the joy of 'aysh in anyone

;Nor the cure of a heart nor care for religion

,The inners have become gloomy, perhaps perchance

.A lamp may be kindled by some recluse

,Neither the memorizer is alone (with God) during lessons

.Nor the scholar enjoys any knowledge of certainty

:Hafiz's ambiguous verses on this subject are many. For example

Grab the pleasure of the moment, for Adam did not tarry

.More than a moment in the garden of Paradise

Qushayri states that what is meant by the sufi being the 'son of his Moment' is that he performs whatever has upmost priority for him in the 'state' (hal) he is in; and what is meant by 'the Moment is a sharp sword' is that the requirement (hukm) of each .Moment is cutting and decisive; to fail to meet it is fatal

:(and ۳. Hal (State) and Maqam (Position ۲

Well-known amongst the terms of 'irfan are hal (state) and maqam (position). The State is that which descends upon the 'arif's heart regardless of his will, while his Position is that which he earns and attains through his efforts. The State quickly passes but the Position is lasting. It is said that the States are like flashes of lightning :that quickly vanish. Hafiz says

,A lightning flash from Layla's house at dawn

.Goodness knows, what it did to the love-torn heart of Majnun

:And Sa'di says

Someone asked of he who had

,lost his son

,O enlightened soul, O wise old man

,All the way from Egypt you smelt his shirt

.Why could you not see him in the well of Canaan

,Said he, my State is like a lightning flash

;A moment it's there, another moment gone

,Often it lifts me to the highest sky

.And often I see not what is at my feet

,Should a dervish in his State persist

.The two worlds will lie in his hands

Above we have already quoted the following sentence from the Nahj al-balaghah :which is relevant here too

He has revived his intellect and slain his self, until his (bodily and spiritual) bulkiness shrunk and his coarseness turned into tenderness. Then an effulgence, like brilliant flash of lightning, shone into his heart and illuminated the path before him.... (Nahj al-(balaghah, Khutab, No. ۲۲۰, p. ۳۳۷

The 'urafa' call these flashes lawa'ih, lawami' and tawali' depending upon their degree .of intensity and length of duration

:(and ۵. Qabd (Contraction) and Bast (Expansion ۴

These two words are also amongst those to which the 'urafa' apply a special meaning, They refer to two contrasting spiritual states of the 'arif's soul; qabd (contraction) refers to a sense of desolation felt by it, while bast (expansion) is a state of expansion and joy. The 'urafa' have discussed these two states and their respective causes

.extensively

۶ and ۷. Jam (Gatheredness) and Farq (Separation):

These two terms are much used by the 'urafa'. According to Qushayri: 'That which is on the part of the creature and acquired by the creature and worthy of the station

of creaturehood is called farq; while that which is on the part of God- such as inspiration - is called jam'. He whom God makes halt at the station (maqam) of obedience and worship is at the station of farq; and he upon whom God reveals His .'favours is at the station of jam

:Hafiz says

,Listen to me with the ear of awareness and for pleasure strive

;For these words came at dawn from the caller unseen

'Stop thinking of 'separation ' that you become 'gathered

.For, as a rule, the angel enters as soon as the Devil leaves

:(and ۹. Ghaybah (Absence) and Hudur (Presence ۸

Ghaybah is a state of unawareness of creation that occasionally descends upon the 'arif, in which he forgets himself and his surroundings. The 'arif becomes unaware of :himself due to his presence (hudur) before God. In the words of a poet

,I am not so occupied with you, O of heavenly face

.For the memories of bygone selfhood still flash within my heart

In this state of 'presence' with God and 'absence' from himself and his surroundings, it is possible that important occurrences take place around him without his becoming aware of them. In this connection the 'urafa' have many famous stories. Qushayri writes that Abu Hafs al-Haddad of Nishabur left his trade as a blacksmith because of one incident. Once as he was busy working in his shop, someone recited a verse of the Holy Quran. This put al-Haddad in a state that

rendered him totally heedless of his sensible surroundings. Without realizing it he removed a piece of red-hot iron from the furnace with his bare hand. His apprentice .cried out to him and he returned to his senses. Thereupon he gave up that trade

Qushayri also writes that al Shibli once came to see Junayd while Junayd's wife was also sitting there. Junayd's wife made a movement as if to leave, but Junayd stopped her saying that al-Shibli was in a 'state', and heedless of her. She sat a while. Junayd conversed with al-Shibli for some time until al Shibli slowly began to cry. Junayd then .turned to his wife telling her to veil herself for al-Shibli was returning to his senses

:Hafiz says

,As every report that I heard has led to perplexity

.From now on it is me, the cupbearer, and the state of heedlessness

If it is presence you want do not be absent from Him, Hafiz

.When you meet what you desire, abandon the world and forget it

It is along these lines that the 'urafa' explain the states of the awliya' during their prayers, in which they became totally heedless of themselves and of their surroundings. Later we shall see that there is a level higher than 'absence', and it was .this that the awliya' were subject to

:and ۱۳. Dhawq, Shurb, Sukr and Riyy ۱۰,۱۱,۱۲

The 'urafa' believe that mere conceptual knowledge of anything has no attraction; the attractiveness of a thing and the ability to inspire passion is subsequent to 'tasting'. At the

end of the eighth section of his al-'Isharat Ibn Sina mentions this; he gives the example of a man who is impotent. He says that however much one may describe sexual pleasure to a person devoid of the sexual instinct, who has never had the taste of this pleasure, he will never be sexually aroused. Thus dhawq is the tasting of pleasure. In the terminology of 'irfan it means the actual perception of the pleasure derived from manifestations (tajalliyat) and revelations (mukashafat). Dhawq is the beginning of this, its continuance is called shurb (drinking), its joy sukr (intoxication) and being satiated with it riyy (thirst-quenching).

The 'urafa' are of the view that whatever is derived from dhawq is 'an appearance of intoxication' (tasakur) and not 'intoxication' (sukr) itself. Intoxication, they say, is obtained from 'drinking' (shurb). That which is obtained by 'becoming quenched' (riyy) is 'sobriety' (sahw), or the return to the senses.

It is in this sense that the 'urafa' have talked much about sharab and mey that would ordinarily mean wine.

۱۴, ۱۵ and ۱۶. Mahw, Mahq, and Sahw:

In the 'urafa's discourses, the words mahw (effacement) and sahw (sobriety) are very common. What is meant by mahw is that the 'arif reaches such a stage that his ego becomes effaced in the Divine Essence.

He no more perceives his own ego as others do. And if this effacement reaches such a point that the effects of his ego are also effaced, they call this mahq (obliteration). Mahw and mahq are both higher than the stage

of ghaybah, as indicated above. Mahw and mahq mean fana' (annihilation). Yet it is possible for an 'arif to return from the state of fana' to the state of baqa' (abiding in God). It does not however, mean a retrogression from a higher state; rather it means that the 'arif finds subsistence in God. This state, loftier even than mahw and mahq, is .called sahw

:(Khawatir (Thoughts .۱۷

The 'urafa' call the thoughts and inspirations cast into their hearts waridat (arrivals). These waridat are sometimes in the form of states of 'contraction' or 'expansion', joy or sadness, and sometimes in the form of words and speech. In the latter case they are called khawatir (sing. khatirah). It is as if someone inside him is speaking to the .'arif

The 'urafa' have much to say on the subject of khawatir. They say that they can be rahmani (i.e. from God), shaytani (inspired by the Devil) or nafsani (musings of the self). The khawatir constitute one of the dangers of the path, for it is possible that due to some deviation or error the Devil may come to dominate the human being. In the :words of the Quran

(Verily the satans inspire their friends ... (۶:۱۲۱

They say that the more adept should be able to discern whether the khatirah is from God or from the Devil. The fundamental criterion is to see what a particular khatirah commands or prohibits; if its command or prohibition is contrary to the dicta of the Shari'ah, then it is

:definitely satanic. The Quran says

Shall I inform you upon whom the Satans descend ? They descend upon every lying, (sinful one. (۲۶:۲۲۱-۲۲۲

:and ۲۰. Qalb, Ruh and Sirr .۱۹,.۱۸

The 'urafa' have different words for the human soul; sometimes they call it nafs (self), sometimes qalb (heart), sometimes ruh (spirit) and sometimes sirr (mystery). When the human soul is dominated and ruled by desires and passions they call it nafs. When it reaches the stage of bearing Divine knowledge, it is called qalb. When the light of Divine love dawns within it, they call it ruh. And when it reaches the stage of shuhud, they call it sirr. Of course, the 'urafa' believe in levels beyond this, which they call khafi .('(the 'hidden') and akhfa (the 'most hidden

:(The Mystic's Stations (Maqamat

The 'urafa' maintain that in order to arrive at the stage of true gnosis, there are stages and stations that must be covered. Unless covered, the 'urafa' hold, to arrive .at the station of true gnosis is impossible

Irfan has a facet that it shares with theosophy (hikmat ilahi), while many of the facets' of these two disciplines differ. The facet common to them both is that the aim of both is knowledge of God (ma'rifat Allah). They differ in that theosophy does not aim solely .at knowledge of God but rather aims at a knowledge of the order of being

The knowledge that is sought by the theosophist (hakim) is of the system of existence, of which, naturally, knowledge of God is an important pillar. The goal of .'irfan, on the other hand, is exclusively knowledge of God

In the view of 'irfan, knowledge of God is total knowledge. Everything must be known in the light of knowledge of God and from the point of view of tawhid; such knowledge .is a derivative of knowledge of God

Secondly, the knowledge sought by the hakim is intellectual knowledge and can be likened to the knowledge acquired by the mathematician after thought and reflection .on a particular mathematical problem

However, the knowledge sought by the 'arif is experienced and witnessed; it can be likened to the knowledge acquired by an experimental scientist in his laboratory. The hakim seeks certain knowledge ('ilm al-yaqin), while the 'arif seeks the certainty of .(direct vision ('ayn al-yaqin

Thirdly, the means employed by the hakim are his reason, deductions and proofs, whereas those employed by the 'arif are the heart and the purification, disciplining and perfecting of the self. The hakim seeks, through the telescope of his mind, to study the order of existence, while the 'arif seeks to prepare the whole of his being so as to arrive at the core of reality. He seeks to reach reality like a drop of water in the search of the sea. In the view of the hakim, the perfection expected of a human being lies in understanding reality, while in the 'arif's view it lies in reaching reality. In the hakim's view an imperfect human being is one who is ignorant, while in the 'arif's view .the imperfect human is one who has remained distant and separated from his origin

The 'arif therefore sees perfection in reaching rather than in understanding. And in order to reach the principal goal and the stage of true gnosis, he views the traversing of several stages and stations as being necessary and essential. This he calls sayr wa .suluk, the science of inward wayfaring

.These stages and stations have been discussed in great detail in the books of 'irfan

Here it is not possible to explain, even briefly, each and every one of them. However, in order at least to give a general impression, I believe that we can do no better than to turn to the ninth section of Ibn Sina's al-'Isharat. Although Ibn Sina is mainly a philosopher, not a mystic, he is not a 'dry' philosopher, and especially towards the end .of his life he developed mystic inclinations

In his al-'Isharat, which appears to be his last work, he has devoted a whole section to the 'stations' of the gnostics. This section being extraordinarily sublime and beautiful, we consider it more suitable for our purposes to present a summary of this section, .'rather than citing or translating suitable passages from the books of the 'urafa

:Zahid, 'abid and 'arif

He who abstains from the enjoyments of the world, even its wholesome ones, is called a zahid (ascetic); and he who is careful to perform worship, prayer and fasting and the like, is called an 'abid (devotee); and he who keeps his thought turned perpetually towards the realm of light in order that the light of the Real shine in his breast is called an 'arif; and sometimes two or more of these epithets may apply to .the same person

Although Ibn Sina defines here the zahid, the 'abid and the 'arif, yet at the same time he is defining zuhd, 'ibadah, and 'irfan. This is because a definition of zahid, 'abid, or tarif per se includes implicitly a definition of

zuhd, 'ibadah, or 'irfan. Thus the conclusion to be drawn from this passage is that zuhd is abstinence from worldly enjoyments; 'ibadah is the performance of specific acts like prayer, fasting, reciting the Quran and the like; and 'irfan is turning away the mind from everything but Allah and paying complete attention to the Divine Essence so that .the light of the Real may shine on one's heart

The last clause indicates an important point. One or more of these characteristics may occur in combination. Thus it is possible for an individual to be an 'abid and a zahid, a zahid and an 'arif, an 'abid and an 'arif, or an 'abid, zahid, and 'arif at one and the same time. Ibn Sina has not elaborated this, but he implies that although it is possible for one to be a zahid or an 'abid and not be an 'arif, it is not possible for one to be an 'arif and not be a zahid and an 'abid. One may be both a zahid and an 'abid without being an 'arif, but an 'arif by definition is also a zahid and an 'abid. So, although not every .zahid or 'abid is an 'arif, every 'arif is a zahid and an 'abid

In the next passage we will see that the zuhd of an 'arif differs in its goal from that of a non-'arif. In fact, the spirit and essence of the 'arif's zuhd and 'ibadah are different from those of the

:non-'arif

The zuhd for the non-'arif, is a transaction by which he gives up the pleasures of the world for the pleasures of the Hereafter, whereas for the 'arif it is something through which he dissociates himself from everything that keeps him from attention towards God and he looks down on everything except God. Whereas worship for the non-'arif is a transaction by which he performs actions in the world for a reward (ajr, thawab) to be received in the Hereafter, for the 'arif it is a kind of exercise that is aimed at strengthening his self's intellectual and imaginative faculties, and which, by repetition, .draws away the self from the realm of illusion to the realm of the Real

:The 'arif's Goal

The 'arif desires the Real (God) not for the sake of something else, and he values nothing above his knowledge of the Real, and his worship of Him is because He is worthy of worship and it is a worthy way of relating himself to Him; it is not out of .(desire (for rewards) or fear (of chastisement

The meaning of this is that in terms of his aims the 'arif is a muwahhid. He seeks only God, yet his desire of God is not on account of His gifts in this world or in the Hereafter. Were such to be the case, the real object of his desire would be the gifts, God being only the preliminary means by which the desired gifts are sought. In such a

case, in reality, the final object of worship and desire would be one's own self; for the .purpose of seeking those gifts is the pleasure of the self

However, the 'arif desires whatever he desires for the sake of God. When he desires the gifts of God he does so because they are from Him, and are His favours. They represent His Grace and Magnanimity. So, while the non-'arif seeks God for the sake .of His gifts, the 'arif seeks the gifts of God for the sake of God

Here the question may arise, if the 'arif does not seek God for the sake of anything, then why does he worship Him? Is it not true that every act of worship must have a purpose? Ibn Sina's passage contains the answer. He states that the goal and motivation of the 'arif's worship is one of two things. One is the inherent worthiness of the Worshipped to be worshipped, meaning that one worships God simply because He is worthy of worship. It is rather like someone who upon noticing some admirable qualities in a person or a thing praises that person or thing. If asked what motivated him to utter such praise, or of what benefit was it to him, he will reply that he sought no benefit from his praise, but simply saw that person or thing as being genuinely deserving of praise. This is true of the praise accorded to the heroes or the champions of each and every

.field

The other motivation of the 'arif's worship is the worthiness of worship itself. It bears an intrinsic nobility and beauty of its own, for it is a connection, a tie, between oneself and God. Thus it has a worthiness of its own, and there is no reason why worship .should necessarily entail desire or fear

:Ali (A) has some famous words on this subject'

My God, I do not worship You in fear of Your Fire, nor in desire for Your Paradise, but I .find You worthy of worship so I worship You

The 'urafa' place great importance on this issue, considering it a kind of shirk (polytheism) for one's goal in life and particularly in worship to be something other than God Himself. 'Irfan totally rejects this kind of shirk. Many have written elegantly and subtly on the subject, and we will look at an allegory from Sa'di's Bustan which takes the outward form of a story of Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznah and his close :confidant Iyaz

,One with the Shah of Ghaznah found fault, saying

.What charm has he, the Shah's friend Iyaz

,A flower indeed with neither colour nor smell

.How strange of the nightingale to set its heart upon such a thing

,Someone conveyed this remark to Sultan Mahmud

.Who, on hearing it, was besides himself with anguish

,I love him for his disposition and character'

' .Nor for his pleasing gait and stature

,Heard I once that in a narrow defile

The king's treasure-chest broke

p: ۶۴

.open after a camel fell

,The king, after signalling his bequest

.Spurred on his steed to get ahead hastily

,The riders now fell upon the pearls and corals

.Their thoughts now turning from the king to the treasure

None of the proud lads remained that day

To follow in the king's train except Iyaz

,Looking out, the king saw him, and beholding Iyaz

.His face like a flower bloomed with delight

.What booty have you brought along, ' the king inquired'

,None, 'said, Iyaz. 'I hurried after you'

.Preferring your service to treasure and bounties

Sa'di then turns from this story to the point he wishes to make, which he expresses :thus

,If you look to your friend for his favours

You are tied to yourself not to your friend

A breach of the Way it was if the saints

.Desired of God aught other than God

The First Station

The first level of the 'arif's journey is what they eall 'resolution' (al-'iradah), and this is a fervent desire to catch hold of the Firm Tie (al-'urwat al-wuthqa) that catches hold

of one who is perceptive of true proofs, or who has settled his self through the covenant of faith, so that it impels his heart towards the Holy in order to attain the .(spirit of connection (with Him

In order to explain the first stage of the spiritual path - which in one respect potentially embraces the whole of 'irfan - we are obliged to be somewhat elaborate. The 'urafa' primarily believe

:in a principle which they sum up in the following phrase

.The ends are the return to the beginnings

.Clearly, for the end to be the beginning there are two possibilities

One is that the movement is in a straight line, and that once the object in motion reaches a certain point it changes its direction and retraces exactly the same route that it came. In philosophy it has been proved that such a change of direction would entail an interval of motionlessness, even if imperceptible. Furthermore, these two movements would be opposite to each other. The second possibility is that the movement is on along a curve all of whose points are equidistant from a certain central point, in other words a circle. It is clear that if the movement takes the form of .a circle, naturally the path will end at the point of commencement

An object moving in a circle will continually move farther from the point of beginning until it reaches the point farthest from where it began. This is the point diametrically opposite to the point of commencement. It is also from this point that, with no pause or interval, the return journey (ma'ad) to the point of departure (mabda') commences. The 'urafa' call the first part of the journey, i.e. from the point of departure to the point farthest from it, 'the arc of descent' (qaws al-nazul), and the journey from there back .(to the point of departure, 'the arc of ascent' (qaws al-su'ud

There

is a philosophical view associated with the movement of things from the point of departure to the farthest point which the philosophers call the 'principle of causality' (asl al-'illiyyah), and which the 'urafa' call the 'principle of emanation' (asl al-tajalli); in either case objects travelling along the arc of descent are as if driven from behind. Similarly, the movement of objects from the farthest point to the point of departure .also has its own philosophical theory

This is the principle of every derivative being's desire and passion to return to its origin. In other words, it is the principle of the flight back of everything estranged and stranded to its origin and homeland. This tendency, so the 'urafa' believe, is inherent in each and every particle of existence, including the human being, though in man it .can often be latent and hidden

Man's preoccupations prevent the activity of this tendency, and a series of stimuli are required before this inner inclination will surface. It is the appearance and surfacing of .(this inclination that the 'urafa' term as 'resolution' or 'will' (iradah

Thus in reality this resolution is a type of awakening of a dormant consciousness. 'Abd :al-Razzaq Kashani, in his Istilahat, defines iradah as

A spark in the heart from the fire of love that compels one to answer the summons of .(the Real (Haqiqah

:Khwajah 'Abd Allah Ansari in his Manazil al-sa'irin defines iradah as follows

.(It is the voluntary answer (in actions) to the summons of the Real (Haqiqah

Here it

is necessary to point out that the meaning of iradah being the first stage is that it is the first stage after a chain of other stages has been passed, stages that are called 'preparations' (bidayat), 'doors' (abwab), 'conduct' (mu'amalat). and 'manners' (akhlaq). Thus iradah is the first stage in the terminology of the 'urafa' in the sense .that it signifies a genuine gnostic awakening

:Rumi describes the principle that 'the end is the return to the beginning' as follows

,The parts are faced towards the Whole

;Nightingales are in love with the rose's face

,Whatever comes from the sea to the sea returns

;And everything goes back to its source

,Like the streams rushing down from mountain tops

.My soul, burning with love, longs to leave the body

Rumi opens his Mathnawi by inviting the reader to listen to the plaintive cries of the reed, as it complains of its separation from the reed bed. Thus in the first lines of his Mathnawi Rumi is actually bringing up the first stage of the 'arif, that is iradah, a desire to return to one's origins that is accompanied with the feeling of separation and :loneliness. Rumi says

Listen to the reed as its story it relates

.And of its separation it complains

,Since the time that from the reed bed was I taken

.At my strains have lamented man and woman

O, a heart I seek that is torn with the pain of separation

That it may hear the tale of

.my longing for return

,Whoever remains distant from his origins

.Seeks again the life of reunion

To sum up, Ibn Sina, in the above passage, means that iradah is a desire and longing that, after deep feelings of alienation, loneliness and estrangement, makes its appearance in the human being and motivates him to seek reunion with the Real, a .union which puts an end to the feelings of alienation, loneliness, and helplessness

:Exercise and Self-Discipline

Then what is certainly required is exercise (riyadah), and it is directed towards three ends - the first is to clear the path of all but the Real; the second is to subjugate the 'commanding self' (al-nafs al-'ammarah) to the 'contented self' (al-nafs al-.mutma'innah); the third is to render the heart subtle for awareness

After having commenced the journey at the stage of iradah, the next stage is that of exercise and preparedness. This preparedness is termed riyadah. Nowadays this term is generally misunderstood and it is taken to mean self-mortification. In some religions the principle of mortifying the self is hallowed. Perhaps the best examples of this are to be seen in the Yogis of India. In the terminology of Ibn Sina, however, the .word is not used in this sense

The original meaning of this Arabic word is 'to exercise', or 'to break in a colt.' Thereafter the word was used for physical exercise, a sense which the word still bears today. The 'urafa' borrowed this word, and in their terminology it is used to mean

exercising the soul and preparing it for the illumination of the light of knowledge .(ma'rifah). It is in this sense that the word is used in the passage above

Ibn Sina then declares this exercising and preparing of the soul to be directed towards three aims. The first of these is related to external matters and entails the removal of distractive occupations and the causes of negligence (ghaflah). The second is related to the balance of the inner forces and the removal of agitations from the soul, which he has described as the submission of the 'commanding self' to the 'contented self'. The third relates to qualitative changes in the soul, which he calls 'rending subtle of .'the heart

And the first [of the three aims of riyadah] is aided by true zuhd (i.e. zuhd removes the impediments and the hindering preoccupations, which cause neglect, from the path). The second is aided by several things: worship infused with (presence of heart, concentration and) reflection; melody that serves to strengthen the self through which the accompanying words have an effect on the heart (such as melodious reciting of the Quran, supplications and litanies, and the singing of mystic poetry); the instructive speech of a pure, eloquent speaker who speaks gently and effectively in .the manner of a guide

As for the third goal, it is aided by subtle thoughts (contemplating subtle and delicate ideas and meanings which lead to spiritual refinement) and a chaste love (a love that is spiritual and not

physical and sensual) which is directed by the virtues of the beloved and not ruled .over by sensuality

Then, when iradah and riyadah reach a certain degree, flashes (khalasat) of the dawning light of the Real will descend upon him, delightful as they are, they are momentary like flashes of lightning appearing and instantly vanishing. These they call 'moments' (awqat), and these flashes increase in frequency with greater diligence in .riyadah

As he advances deeper into this, they descend upon him even when he is not exercising. Now often he will glance at something and his glance be deflected from it towards the Holy, bringing to his attention some aspect of the Divine, and a state of .trance (ghashyah) descends upon him, in which, as if, he sees God in everything

Perhaps it is at this stage that his states overwhelm him, disturbing his equanimity, a .change that would be noticed by anyone near him

Then, he reaches a point in his exercises when his 'moments' change into stable tranquility, the brief snatches become familiar and the flashes become a prolonged blaze. Then he achieves an enduring gnostic state which permanently accompanies him from which he derives an ecstatic delight. And when it departs him he becomes .sad and bewildered

And perhaps it is at this stage the state in which he is in will make itself apparent (to others); but as he progresses deeper into this gnosis, its appearance will be less detectable in him and he will be

.absent when (appearing to be) present, and travelling when (appearing to be) still

This passage calls to mind a sentence spoken by 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A) to his disciple :Kumayl ibn Ziyad about the 'friends of God' (awliya' al-Haqq), who exist in every age

Knowledge has led them to the reality of insight, and they are in contact with the spirit of certainty. They find easy what is regarded as rough by those who live in comfort and luxury. They are intimate with what terrifies the ignorant. They are in the company of people with their bodies, yet their souls are lodged in the highest realm. .((Nahj al-balaghah, Hikam, No. ۱۴۷

Until this stage, perhaps, this state of gnosis will occur to him only occasionally. .Thereafter it will gradually become such that it is available to him whenever he wants

Thereafter, he advances further than even this stage until his affair no longer depends on his own wish. Whenever he observes a thing he sees other than it (i.e God), even if his observation is not for the sake of reflection. So, the opportunity presents itself to ascend from the plane of false appearances to the plane of Truth. .He becomes stabilized upon it, while (in the world) he is surrounded by the heedless

Up until this point we have been dealing with the stage of exercise, self-discipline, .struggle and the spiritual itinerary. Now the 'arif has reached his goal

When he crosses from the stage of riyadah to that

of attainment, his inward becomes like a clear mirror facing in the direction of the Real. Sublime delights shower upon him, and he rejoices at his self for what is there of the Real. Now (like one viewing an image in a mirror, who looks either at the image or at the mirror reflecting the image) he is perplexed by two views: the view of the Real .and the view of his own self

Then, he becomes oblivious to his own self and views only the Holy. And if he notices his self it is for the reason of its being the viewer, not for the sake of its own beauty (like one who when looking at an image in a mirror, views the image only; although he does not pay attention to the mirror itself, nevertheless the mirror is seen while viewing the image, though the mirror is not viewed for its own beauty). It is at this point that the wayfarer attains union (and his journey from khalq to Haqq becomes .(complete

Here ends our summary of the ninth section of Ibn Sina's Isharat and his account of the journey from creation (khalq) to God (Haqq). A point that must be added is that the 'urafa' believe in four journeys: sayr min al-khalq ila al-Haqq, sayr bi al-Haqq a al-Haqq, sayr min al-Haqq ila al-khalq bi al-Haqq, sayr fi al-khalq bi al-Haqq (the journey from creation to God; the journey with God in God; the journey with God

.(from God to creation; and finally, the journey in creation with God

The first journey is from creatures to the Creator. The second is in the Creator; it means that in the course of it the 'arif becomes acquainted with His Qualities and Names and himself becomes adorned with the same. In the third journey, he returns towards the creation, without becoming separated from God, in order to guide the people. The fourth journey is amongst the people while still united with God. In this journey the 'arif is with and amongst the people and seeks to guide their affairs so as .to lead them towards God

The summary from Ibn Sina's al-'Isharat given above is related to the first of these journeys. He also gives a brief account of the second journey, but it is not necessary for our purposes to include it. Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, in his commentary on al-'Isharat, says that Ibn Sina has explained the first journey of the 'arif in nine stages. Three stages are related to the beginning of the journey, three to the journey from its beginning to its end, and three are related to the arrival or the union. Some reflection .on Ibn Sina's account makes the point clear

By 'riyadah ' which is translated as 'exercise', Ibn Sina means the exercises in self-discipline that the 'arif undergoes. There are many of these, and the 'arif must follow a chain of stations in these exercises too. Here Ibn Sina is brief

in the extreme, yet the 'urafa' have discussed this matter in detail, and one may seek these details in their works.

Some Terms of 'Irfan:

About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ۹

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ۲۰۰۷, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the .cyberspace

:Our Goals are

(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-

encouraging the populace particularly the youth in investigating the religious issues-

replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers-

providing services for seminary and university researchers-

spreading culture study in the publich-

paving the way for the publications and authors to digitize their works-

:Policies

acting according to the legal licenses-

relationship with similar centers-

avoiding parallel working-

merely presenting scientific contents-

mentioning the sources-

.It's obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author

:Other activities of the institute

Publication of books, booklets and other editions-

Holding book reading competitions-

Producing virtual, three dimensional exhibitions, panoramas of religious and tourism- places

.Producing animations, computer games and etc-

Launching the website with this address: www.ghaemiyeh.com-

Fabricatingdramatic and speech works-

Launching the system of answering religious, ethical and doctrinal questions-

Designing systems of accounting, media and mobile, automatic and handy systems,- web kiosks

Holding virtual educational courses for the public-

Holding virtual teacher-training courses-

Producing thousands of research software in three languages (Persian, Arabic and- English) which can be performed in computers, tablets and cellphones and available and downloadable with eight international formats: JAVA, ANDROID, EPUB, CHM, PDF, HTML, CHM, GHB on the website

Also producing four markets named "Ghaemiyeh Book Market" with Android, IOS,- WINDOWS PHONE and WINDOWS editions

:Appreciation

We would appreciate the centers, institutes, publications, authors and all honorable .friends who contributed their help and data to us to reach the holy goal we follow

:Address of the central office
Isfahan, Abdorazaq St, Haj Mohammad JafarAbadei Alley, Shahid Mohammad HasanTavakkoly Alley, Number plate ۱۲۹, first floor
Website: www.ghbook.ir
Email: Info@ghbook.ir
Central office Tel: ۰۳۱۳۴۴۹۰۱۲۵
۰۲۱ ـ Tehran Tel: ۸۸۳۱۸۷۲۲
Commerce and sale: ۰۹۱۳۲۰۰۰۱۰۹
Users' affairs: ۰۹۱۳۲۰۰۰۱۰۹

Introduction of the Center – Ghaemiyeh Digital Library